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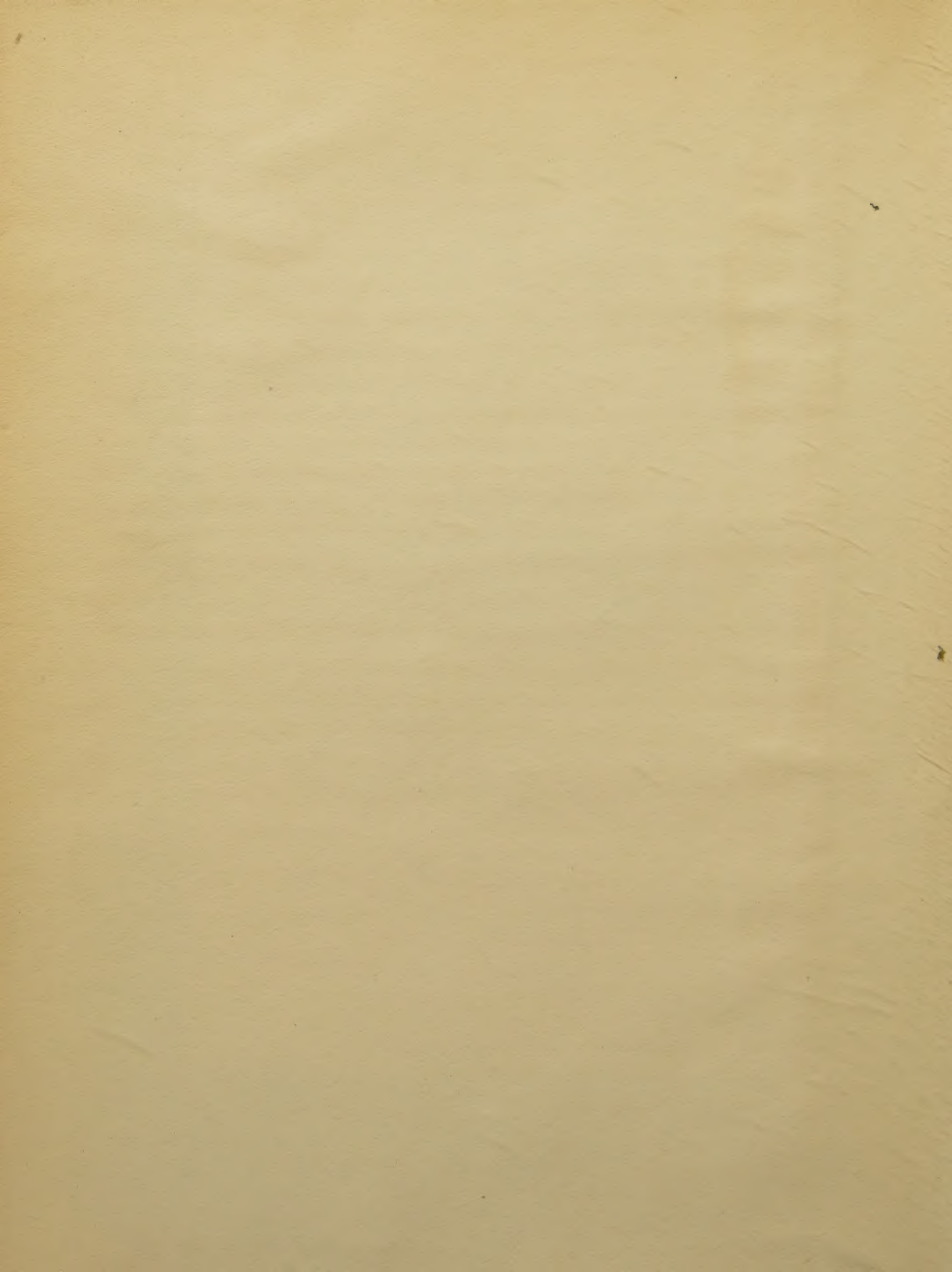
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**METROPOLITAN
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**BRONTË MOORS & VILLAGES
FROM THORNTON TO HAWORTH**





THE MOOR ROAD, OXENHOPE

14276
BRONTË MOORS & VILLAGES
FROM THORNTON TO HAWORTH
BY ELIZABETH SOUTHWART
WITH THIRTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS BY
T. MACKENZIE ✿ ✿ ✿ ✿ ✿



✓
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PREFACE

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Thornton, 1923.

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**BRONTË MOORS & VILLAGES
FROM THORNTON TO HAWORTH**

THORNTON—EAST







"THORNTON MOOR"

CHAPTER I

THORNTON—EAST

THE Brontë country from Thornton to Haworth is a stretch of wild hills and rocks and yawning quarries; of harshly outlined fields, with the relentless moors creeping up to their black walls, waiting for the first moment of forgetfulness to take back what has been wrung from them. A country of whistling heather and slapping howling winds, a country that winter loves to clasp to its savage bosom until it would seem that every drop of life blood would be drained, changing the snow to water that it may take a firmer grip with ice. A merciless country, that takes its toll of life on snow-bound moor, the pit and the quarry; where man wrings bread from the soil by the sweat of his brow, where he must work if he would live, for of food and covering he needs more than the native of the south.

Its beauty is the beauty of grim expanses, the stark outline of rocks, the wild gloom of the moor when the protesting heather bends to the north wind, or reflects the grey of the lowering clouds.

It has its April days, as wilful and capricious, as full of laughter and passionate tears, as Catherine Earnshaw; its winsome days, when the sun deigns to woo the bluebell under the scanty trees; but its true character, its fierce beauty, is

seen in winter, for its gospel is endurance and hardship, the gospel of doing without—of starving the senses that the spirit may endure.

We cannot tell what the Brontë sisters would have been if brought up in their father's turbulent Ireland, nor whether their mother's Cornwall would have softened or cramped them. We do not know how much of their wild surroundings went to the moulding of their genius, but we do know that the spirit of this country, which was there before the Brontës came to it, found these frail-bodied sisters in Haworth parsonage, clear-eyed, sensitive, and passionate, and used them for its interpreters.

It was in the solitudes that Emily Brontë found the personality of this district—the personality which belongs to every village and town, or part of a town, and every hill in a region of mountains. Each individual of every generation has added his little, but it cannot be entirely of man's making, for it is to be found where man's foot has never trod. In fact it would seem, at times, as though the spirit stopped just long enough to stamp its character on the intruder, man, then retired again to the solitudes.

To the gentle Anne, a fragrant snowdrop trying to bloom on a wild heath, the spirit of this particular district, which she could neither understand nor absorb, could bring nothing but suffering. Charlotte, fascinated, approached it bravely, yet diffidently, and from it sketched her men characters in strong lines. But, significantly, it is in Shirley, which, as she admitted, was a study of the character of Emily, that she

expresses most nearly the wild unrestrained liberty of the country of her birth and up-bringing. It was the shy Emily herself who understood—and, understanding, passionately loved. We wonder, somewhat wistfully, what her interpretation would have been had it been untouched by the influence of her pitiable, half-lunatic brother. Not only the moral but the artistic sense is revolted when Isabella ends the story of her escape from the purgatory at Wuthering Heights—a tale of piled-up agony and lurid evil—with the picture of little Hareton hanging a litter of puppies to a chair back. The country that she knew is wild, tempestuous, and indomitable, in its great moments mercilessly unmindful of little man if he happens to get in the way—but not deliberately evil.

As everybody knows, these women of genius were born at Thornton, in the early part of the last century. Because of this some Power has the giftie gien us, at Thornton, to see ourselves, and our village, as others see us, and the vision has left us somewhat bewildered. We had thought of ourselves as very plain, ordinary, everyday folk, living in a very ordinary, everyday village. A village, to us, was a collection of houses, a house a place to keep the cold away, and a treasure-house for our loved possessions; beauty was a thing apart, to be found in books, perhaps, or away on the moors. It was therefore a shock to be told that our village was ugly. Living in this little community of homes we were surprised to learn that Thornton was desolate and wild, with great tracks of bleak land, enclosed by stone dykes. But we purred again on learning that it was “beautifully situated

on the northern slope of the valley, verdant pastures spread over the adjacent fields, and wooded dells with shady walks beautify and enrich the district."

Had we been exiled, and asked to write a description of the place it would have been like that. For memory refuses to be bored with the uninteresting things of life, and the law of compensation makes a country that gives little develop in its folk a tremendous capacity for getting what it wants out of that little. If the critical stranger makes our shady dells and rippling water into a dozen trees on the side of Bent Ing Beck and a tiny wood at Shillicake, we can tell him about Minadab o' Short Amos's. Dry Jonie at Hill Top carried the philosophy a little too far when he said he liked toothache because it gave him such a nice feeling when it stopped, but Minadab said that he was as rich as the Prince o' Wales, for if the prince wore two suits at a time he'd be too warm, and if he ate two meals at once he'd be poorly. We had the quivering delight of our one tree, and the ecstasy of seeing the many for the first time after the faculty of appreciation had developed. And, if the sight of the many is not delayed until the faculty for seeing has deteriorated, this stoical training may be better than the ultra-modern one of starting with the best first.

An American writer, not content with calling the village desolate and wild, says that when Patrick Brontë came to Thornton, with the exception of the Fiji Islanders, the Yorkshire people were perhaps the wildest and most dogged in existence. Another American tells us that, in 1899, there

were still loud-voiced women, their petticoats kilied high above their bare or broganned feet, clacking socially together while hanging out dripping lines of clothes in the street. I have heard of a boy who borrowed his first pair of boots that he might go to hear the wonderful new thing called an organ, which had come to Thornton church, but if a woman in 1899 had stood with bare feet to hang out her clothes in the street her neighbours would have been as surprised as the American visitor, and probably a great deal more shocked. I leave to the imagination what she would have said had she known that it was recorded in a book that she hung out her clothes while they were still dripping.

After learning from another source that our forefathers were flighty, shiftty, and fond of fuss we are somewhat comforted to hear that there was a widespread religious feeling, deep-rooted in the hearts of the people, and scarcely a house where religion was not strictly upheld, and the Sabbath observed with Puritan strictness. And this in spite of the fact that a street of twenty-three houses had three inns. We are also told that they were earnest and conscientious, independent and remarkably honest: in manners rough and harsh to a stranger, but under apparent coarseness there was no lack of kindly feeling.

Thornton proper, like every other village in the Brontë district, is intaken land; the southern side rises to the skyline with one sweep, a great expanse of fields, with a thousand walls wriggling about them, a tree or two, and farms dotted here and there. Intaken land has the look of a magnificent

proud animal, robbed of its beauty, with an insignificant creature called man soothingly patting its shorn back and telling it to be useful. From the heights it looks over the wall with a stare of indignant shame, as it fiercely strains at its halter—and it is for its conqueror to see to it that the halter be strong.

In the Brontë days, before the educationalists took them in hand, the people of Thornton practised the theory that if a thing be worth doing at all it is worth doing well. They drank heavily, swore heartily, danced until the dawn in their clattering clogs. They were converted in transports of joy, saw the skies opened, and heard the mighty shouts of the rejoicing angels as they proclaimed throughout the heavens the news of a repentant sinner. They then burnt their fiddles, emptied their wine casks, and the wit that had sent a taproom into a roar convulsed the congregation of a crowded chapel.

The humorist, dressed in a sheet, rose from dark corners at unexpected moments, at prayer meetings placed his neighbour's top hat where it could be pounded to a concertina by a fervent brother, and put sheep, or dogs, down the wide chimneys to arrive below, black and glowering, and frighten the hardened sinner from the error of his ways.

If they took to saving they added farm to farm and "nipped a curran' i' two" (pinched a currant in two); those with a tendency towards money-making went off to America and became millionaires. The musicians carried their double basses on their backs through hail and snow,

from house to house at Christmas, and in summer, at Anniversary time, from village to village. Singers lifted up their voices to the stars, night after night, and went back to their looms at dawn with sleep on their eyelids and glory in their hearts. "Them were times!"

Away down at Leventhorpe, where the boundary line used to be before Thornton became submerged in its more powerful neighbour, the Bradford Corporation has built us a fine wall, and is making us a grand new road, and lining it with trees. The road has lamps on both sides, and the houses at Thornton are moving downwards to meet the houses at Fairweather Green. Once upon a time this was the loneliest spot between Thornton and Bradford, and before the railway was brought to Thornton had to be passed by the traveller who had missed the only means of conveyance, the milk cart. Its very name "The Tunnel"—so called because the beck runs under the road—struck terror to the heart. On sunny days the beck tripped along happily enough, but it turned to give a whispered warning before passing out of sight, and the trees, standing like sentinels on the road side, speeded the traveller on his way with their ominous murmured tales of robbery and violence. Sitting on the hearthrug, in the firelight, as children we listened to hair-raising tales about The Tunnel. One ghost story I remember.

One rather misty night a man, whose nerves had been strung to their highest pitch before arriving at the spot, suddenly saw a head, without a body, coming towards him. After a moment of terror he regained the use of his limbs,

turned, and fled back to Fairweather Green; the few wits left him fled also at the sound of running feet behind him. A head without a body was bad enough, but a bodiless head with feet——!

When a great hand gripped his shoulder he woke the echoes with a scream, and turned, to find the head on a level with his own.

“A fine bit o’ company tha art on a dark neet!” said a reproachful voice.

“But wheare has ta left thy body?” asked the other, still bewildered.

“Under t’ mist, for sure—where thine is.”

After the man had learnt that a ground mist had cut off his own body as well, two bodiless heads turned round, and bobbed about on the top of the mist, to Thornton.

The old mill, once used for “fulling” cloth, still stands, away back on the old Bradford road, which “wound in and out, and round and about” as though it was of far more importance to test the shade of every tree than to get about its business of reaching Thornton. The portion of the mill used for wool-combing looks aggressively new, but the old part, a picture of desolation with its broken windows, is a reminder of the past. Here the becks of Bell Dean and Pinchbeck valley rush together, and mingle the sound of their busy chatter with the sighing of the trees and the dripping of the little waterfall near the mill. Here, too, in this sheltered spot, the meadows are of a rich green, and fringed

with bluebells, and give to the keen-eyed perhaps the only cowslips to be found in the district.

Leventhorpe Hall, now a farm, stands a little way back from the main road, its frontage towards Clayton. The original entrance is hidden from view by barns, and the part which was probably the entrance hall is now used as kitchens. The present Hall was built in the seventeenth century, but the Leventhorpes were a family of note in 1300—one authority says 1100—holding the manors of Leventhorpe, Horton and Clayton.

From the farther kitchen, which has diamond flooring of stone, a romantic old staircase winds its way upwards until it is lost in the roof, for, it is said, there was once a third storey, and the Hall had then as many windows as there are days in a year. It has also been said that an artificial embankment outside suggested that there was once a moat. Folk of the square-headed type smile at both these statements. But we will have none of their doubts, for even as we look the roof rises in the air, hundreds of windows unclosetheir eyes and look out at us from the widening walls, and round about the house water with scarce a ripple reflects a crescent moon.

People not of our kind haunt these old Thornton halls. Ladies with sweeping robes, great feathered hats and flowing curls come out of the studded doors, climb the horsing steps outside the gateways, and are helped to their horses' backs by gallant gentlemen, with serious faces, top hats and knee breeches. But we must not stay too long, or the door will

open, and therefrom will emerge a farmer of a very modern type, who will shatter the vision to a thousand fragments.

This meeting place of the valleys is flat, for this district, and a tale is told about a house at School Green, when one of the snowstorms that used to be common had hidden the boundary marks, and made the fields an expanse of unspotted white, staring back at a leaden sky. In spite of the state of the roads the news flew from one house to another that an old woman's cottage was completely buried. And so covered was it that the willing helpers made several false starts before finding the right spot.

They dug feverishly, hoping against hope that they might find the old woman before she was either suffocated or frightened to death. When the window was at last reached they saw the dame peering at them curiously, and her first remark, when she could be heard, was :

“ What's to do? ”

After being told of her premature burial, she said calmly :

“ I thowt, somehah, 'at it were a long while in comin' dayleet.”

Hoyle Ing is a fifteenth-century house which was used as one of the secret meeting-places by the early dissenters. Tradition says that when the scout saw a suspicious character approach he would say in a warning whisper : “ Hoil in ! ” — which, in the vernacular, means “ get into the hole, or hiding-place.” “ Kipping,” another of their meeting-places, is explained as “ Keep in ! ” but antiquarians, as they often do, shatter these little legends. They admit that “ Hoyle ”





THE CORNER OF WINDS, CONNING CORNER, THORNTON

means "hole," but "ing" is a meadow. "Kipping," they say, means the meadow of the "keep," or stocks. The village stocks, as far back as living man can remember, were outside the churchyard, but for some time now they have been inside the grounds at Thornton Hall.

It has been suggested that Conning Corner also got its name during the early days of the dissenters—Conning Corner, now, alas! called Roundfield Place, is half-way up the hill, where the wind at times flattens a man against the wall, and keeps him there until it is its will to let him go. Our grandfathers called it Cunning Corner, but it is believed that the original name was "Conning." Whether this was because of the fine view—stretching from Bradford almost to Halifax—or because of its usefulness to the dissenters' scout must be left to the imagination.

The ivied walls of Thornton Hall may be seen from the road, rising high above the churchyard walls. If Charlotte Brontë did not dearly love a lord she dearly loved the homes they lived in, and had her father stayed in Thornton probably one of her little heroine governesses would have brought her box to this door, instead of to Thornfield Hall. As this, the largest and most imposing of the halls at Thornton, is the only one which has not been converted into a farm, the inscription over the old stone arbour is rather significant: "Deus Nobis Haec Otia Fecit" (God made this leisure for us).

When William Cudworth was writing, in 1876, some of the rooms still retained portions of the old ornamental mould-

ing and diamond flooring. The diamond flooring remains, but evidently the moulding was lost, in the renovations which took place in 1886.

It is a grand old hall, with its ivy-covered walls black with time, and its quiet garden. For generations back there have been fascinating tales about an underground passage, from Storr Heights to the Hall. Flushed with the romp in the hay we used to sit, chin on knees, at the top of Storr Heights fields, and talk until we saw these Cavaliers, with their curls and feathers and velvet suits, hiding in the tunnel until nightfall, when they could give the mysterious signal behind the secret panel at the Hall. We saw the panel fly open, and the pale-faced Cavaliers, their sky-blue velvet and silver spurs splashed with mud, creep stealthily into the room. We would have fed them with our last crumb! We were all Roundheads by training—but the Roundheads did not know how to dress.

In these busy days the secret passage is forgotten; but the walls, four or five feet thick, are there, and though some of them make spacious cupboards, there is enough space walled and boarded up to hide fifty Cavaliers.

Parted from the Hall by the garden and walls only is the churchyard, in which stands what remains of the Old Bell Chapel, where, for six years, Patrick Brontë preached. One wall is left, and recently the old cupola has been rebuilt, and stands on the site of the old tower. It is believed that all but two of the stones used in the rebuilding are the original ones. They had been lying about the graveyard, and serving

a temporary usefulness in field walls, since the old church was demolished.

The old font used when all the Brontë children but Maria were baptized is in the new church, but the registers containing the entries of the baptisms are kept religiously under lock and key at the Vicarage.

To Mrs. Gaskell the plain weather-beaten old church looked ancient and solitary, as though left behind by the village, which had clustered round the mills and chapel built by the dissenters—she was evidently speaking of the time when she saw it, for the first Thornton mill was built six years after the Brontës left Thornton. When the church was built, it would not have the look of being left behind, for it was not only in the centre of the hamlets which then represented Thornton—School Green, Leventhorpe, Kipping, Headley, Close Head and Alderscholes—but in the centre of its wider district, a radius of eight or ten miles. Men and women on the heights at Clayton, across the valley at Allerton, and over the top at Wilsden answered the call when the bell in the old cupola rang out its summons to worship. The cupola is silent now, for its tongue has gone; it stands in its lowly position on the ground, a reminder of its days of service long ago.

In Patrick Brontë's day the chapel was nearly three hundred years old. The two galleries almost blocked out the light, high box pews assisted meditation on the part of the smaller members of the congregation by hiding them from each other's sight when seated, and the aisles were literally

honey-combed with the vaults of part generations of sturdy yeomen.

Here, for five or six winters, Mrs. Brontë, and the children who were old enough to be taken to church, sat and shivered. This house of stone pillars, unsheltered on every side, with the bitter winds seeking out its weak spots, and trampled snow slowly melting on its stone floor, must have been a cold spot indeed. If there were no artificial heating, which is likely, it is to be hoped that the sermons were of shorter duration than those of their neighbours, the dissenters.

Over the entrance to the old building was a notice board to the effect that "This chapel was beautified 1818. P.B. incumbent." There was an old stone font inside the church dated 1679, and another outside, which bore the date 1687. It is believed that on summer mornings the baptism service was held outside the church.

On one of the inscribed stones built into the wall still standing are the words, partly obliterated, "This chappell was builded—Freemason in the year of our Lord 1682." The other inscription was dated 1587, and this was probably the time when the oldest part of the church was built.

Near the old church there are some curious epitaphs, suggestive of bygone days. Lying quietly by the side of Accepted Lister—that well-known preacher of the frail body and mighty spirit—is a woman who passed through life addressed as "Love." This appears to have been a favourite name with these old Puritans.



THE OLD BELL CHAPEL, THORNTON



On one gravestone we read :

“ You that are young prepare to die,
We were but young, though here we lie.
Remember death, for it is good,
A rose may wither in the bud.

“ An early summons Jesus sends
To call a child above,
And whispers to the weeping friends
‘ Tis all the fruit of love.’ ”

Yet another tells of a woman not so resigned to life's ills :

“ His mother bought this gravestone, his wife did not,
Forshame ! Forshame ! Forshame ! ”

We can only hope that the mother and her daughter-in-law are better friends now.

THORNTON—SOUTH





HILL TOP, THORNTON

CHAPTER II

THORNTON—SOUTH

AT Green Mount the more populated part of the village begins, but there is Green Lane, on the left, an alluring narrow lane, with a high causeway. It dips and bends, then suddenly runs round the corner, with a bewitching invitation to follow, and gives the romance it promises by taking us to Headley—a hamlet on a hill. It was a hamlet in the Brontë days, and is a hamlet still, for it has grown scarcely at all. It has a Hall, an Elizabethan mansion almost hidden behind its high walls, and the great door with its stone balls at the sides. The entrance door is of black oak, and there is also oaken wainscoting in the upper rooms. The Midgleys, lords of the manor, lived there for about a hundred years, but, like Leventhorpe Hall, it is now a farm.

There is a curious entry in the Haworth marriage register for 1653, concerning one of the Midgleys: "A gentleman named Reesby, and the relict of one Mr. Oates, being a sister of John Midgley, of Headley, married by a man who looked like a minister."

There are many tales told by men whose hair is now whitening about one farmer who lived at Headley—a member of a family who farmed the land there for several generations. He was a shrewd man, who knew how to get the best from his

land, and who, perhaps, had a keener sense of humour behind his grim countenance than the children he kept away from his land gave him credit for. The greater part of the land in Pinchbeck valley belongs to this farm, and the fields on the south side of the beck, known as "On t' Bots" (Bottoms), were a fine playground for children who could evade the eagle eye of their owner.

One hot afternoon a group of eight boys made a bathing pool in the beck, and, after leaving their clothes on the bank, forgot everything else in the enjoyment of their mad antics in the water. Suddenly somebody shouted: "There's Old Ike!" and a scramble was made for the bank. But before they could reach their clothing Ike had gathered it into a heterogeneous bundle, and walked off with it, saying:

"Come on if yoh wantt yor cloas!"

The ills they knew not of at Headley Hall were preferable to the certain ills that would result if they went home naked, therefore the trembling, weeping group, the wind drying their bodies and the nettles stinging their legs, followed the old man up the Bent Ing fields, and onwards to the Hall.

After ushering them into the kitchen—a grand large room, with peculiarly leaded windows—he threw the clothes on the hearthrug, in front of a blazing fire, emphasized his command for the boys to be seated with a crack of his whip, then shouted for Bessie.

Bessie, the maid, who had been busy elsewhere, opened the door with a song on her lips, that changed suddenly to a startled: "Oh!" as she vanished from sight.

“ Make eight basins o’ gruel,” called her master, “ an’ put plenty o’ ginger an’ cayenne in.”

“ Ay ! ” came Bessie’s voice faintly.

Watched by eight pairs of fearful eyes the farmer lifted a large ledger from a shelf, took a pen in his hand, then looked sternly over his spectacles at the shivering boy at one end of the long-settle.

“ What do they call thee ? ” he asked.

“ Mm ! ” he said, grimly, after hearing the name, “ Jonas’s lad ? Then it’s thy father ’at stole that pig o’ mine, last back end. I’ll make thee pay,” he added, making an elaborate entry in the ledger.

“ He didn’t ! ” came the response, indignation giving a courage which was instantly squashed by another stern look, and another entry about two stolen turkeys.

The father of the next boy, who was a mill manager, owed for a cartload of manure, the father of the next two years’ rent, and so on to the end of the line ; and surely never before had eight boys with such disreputable fathers sat in one room. Then the blushing Bessie, her eyes averted, brought in a huge tray, with eight steaming basins.

The first spoonful of the gingery gruel brought tears.

“ Get ’em supped ! ” roared the farmer, “ I’m not goin’ to have your mothers sayin’ I gave yoh yor deeath o’ cold.”

And “ sup ” them they did, with burning throats, and the tears that ran down their cheeks mingling with the perspiration that rolled down their bodies. When the last

spoonful had disappeared he jumped up again, his whip cracking furiously.

“ Now then, get yoh donned !—i’ quicksticks !—an’ be off ! An’ never let me see yor faces agean till yoh get yor summonses. It may be six month or it may be twelve—sometimes they’re a long while in workin’ araand. An’ let me catch yoh trespassin’ agean if yoh dar’ ! ”

The boys snatched whatever article of clothing lay nearest, and ran, to sort out stockings, coats and pants, and dress in the open field, then wait, until kindly time brought forgetfulness, for the summonses that never came.

In the old days many of the farmers of this district justified Mrs. Gaskell’s opinion that they were perfect sleuth-hounds in pursuit of money ; perhaps the reluctance of the land to give them prosperity was originally accountable for this. A man once remonstrated with his neighbour for working and sacrificing to make the money that his sons were spending recklessly.

“ Well,” said the farmer, “ if they have as mich pleasure in spending it as I’ve had in savin’ it we s’all all be satisfied.”

A man in this neighbourhood worked for his father, a farmer, for nearly twenty years without getting a penny for wages. What was the use of wages, argued the father, when he was fed and clothed, and all the money would be his when he, the father, had done with it ?

The son, however, wanted to get married, and, being of a persevering type, he saved all the twopences and threepences he got in tips, and hid them in the chimney, until there was

enough money to buy a wedding ring, and to pay for a ride in the milk cart to Bradford Parish Church. The newly married couple walked back, and went to live with the bride's parents, the wife keeping on with her work at the mill. Eventually the farmer died—a bankrupt, and what the son got for his years of service was, significantly, a waggon chain.

Charlotte Brontë told Mrs. Gaskell that there was a saying round about Haworth: "Keep a stone in thy pocket seven year; turn it, and keep it seven year longer, that it may be ever ready to thine hand when thine enemy draws near."

That has been a familiar saying in Thornton, also, but it can scarcely be called a characteristic of the people. I know of only one story that gives colour to it. A pit owner, not far from Thornton, learnt that a neighbour had risked his little all in sinking for a pit which was likely to be a success. It was in a seam above that which he himself was working, one which, probably, he had meant to buy. He offered to buy the pit, but the offer was refused: the smaller man was realizing a long-cherished ambition, and was not willing to let it go. Opposition only made the Naboth's vineyard more desirable, but arguments proved in vain, and, to all appearance, the matter dropped.

A while afterwards the new pit began to sink. The first mine-owner had kept on working his own seam, and as he had a good many men he soon passed under the part of the seam worked by the new pit. He deliberately left the part he had worked insecurely propped, and the coal above it gradually dropped. The smaller man was ruined, and eventually died

heart-broken, leaving his wife to struggle on with a family of small children as best she could.

Bent Ing Bottoms have lost their romance. Whether the golfers have driven it away—for the fields now form part of the Thornton Golf Links—or whether the advance of modernity in other forms is to blame, it is difficult to say. Once they were the haunts of “Peggy-Wi’-T’-Lantren” and the Bloody-tongue. Peggy, a dame in a white mob cap, kilted skirt and white stockings, walked about with a lantern, enticing the unwary traveller to his doom. She was given to wandering, for, they say, Jim Craven Well, half a mile away, was a place to be avoided after nightfall.

The Bloody-tongue was a great dog, with staring red eyes, a tail as big as the branch of a tree, and a lolling tongue that dripped blood. When he drank from the beck the water ran red right past the bridge, and away down—down—nearly to Bradford town. As soon as it was quite dark he would lope up the narrow flagged causeway to the cottage at the top of Bent Ing on the north side, give one deep bark, then the woman who lived there would come out and feed him. What he ate we never knew, but I can bear testimony to the delicious taste of the toffee she made.

When the dark was coming we used to sit on the filled-in pit, which makes a hump in the middle of the field, and wait for him. The sun would sink redly, through the arches of the viaduct, the trees that lined the beck would grow an ever darker green until they became black, the beck would begin to gurgle and gulp in a queer way; and down in the hollow we

would hear a whimper, a whine, a moan, a snarl. Then, with scalps and spines playing queer tricks, we would wait and wait. But none of our little band ever saw him, except one girl, and she saw him every time.

One Saturday a girl who lived at Headley came to a birthday party in the village, and was persuaded to stay to the end by her friends, who promised to see her "a-gaiterds" if she would. As soon as the party was over the brave little group started out. But when they reached the end of the passage which leads to the fields, and gazed into the black well, at the bottom of which lurked the Bloody-tongue, one of them suggested that Mary should go alone, and they would wait there to see if anything happened to her.

Mary was reluctant, but had no choice in the matter, for go home she must. They waited, according to promise, listening to her footsteps on the path, and occasionally shouting into the darkness :

"Are you all right, Mary?"

"Ay!" would come the response.

And well was it for Mary that the Gytrash had business elsewhere that night, for her friends confess now that at the first sound of a scream they would have fled back to lights and home.

We wonder sometimes if the Bloody-tongue were not better than his reputation, for he lived there many years, and there was never a single case known of man, woman or child who got a bite from his teeth, or a scratch from his claws. Now he is gone, nobody knows whither, though there have been

rumours that he has been seen wandering disconsolately along Egypt Road, whimpering quietly to himself, creeping into the shadows when a human being approached, and, when a lantern was flashed on him, giving one sad, reproachful glance from his red eyes before he vanished from sight.

The railway viaduct, spanning Pinchbeck valley, is rather imposing. Many of the men who had helped to make it found work in the quarries when it was finished, and settled in Thornton, their children having previously found work in the mills.

William Cudworth, writing in 1876, two years before the railway was finished, says :

“The nearest passenger station to Thornton is ‘Pack Horse Yard,’ from whence what is facetiously called a ‘carriage and pair’ may be hired for fourpence. The passengers have a choice of conveyances of various builds, the most popular being a machine resembling a dyer’s cart, with windows in it, and receptacles for huge milk cans. Having disposed of his milk the next concern of the proprietor is to look up his customers for the return journey, whom he addresses thus : ‘Nah, then, are ta bahn up wi’ ma?’ the answer to which is : ‘Ah soin are ta bahn up?’ ‘Wah, directly.’”

The passengers would then get into the bus, place their parcels on their own knees and their neighbours’ toes, then be trundled off into the cold darkness, bumping over stones, jolting into cart ruts, cheeks “all of a dither,” and voices quavering in their throats as they conversed.

If they arrived home without accidents they would enjoy a warm fire and appetizing tea, for those left behind had also





THE MILL

braved cold and wet by standing in the queue outside Caline Holder's, and brought home muffins "rickin' hot thro' t' backstun."

When Patrick Brontë went to visit his friend, the Rev. William Morgan, at Bradford, the only mode of conveyance would be the milk cart. Probably he preferred to walk, and brave the dangers of the Tunnel.

Near the top of Bent Ing the first mill—eventually called the Old Mill—was built by David Wright, in 1826, for spinning by throstles. In 1828 Simeon Townend introduced at the same mill the first power looms run in Thornton valley. There are no remembered riots here, but the people were so prejudiced against the power looms that the first weavers had to be obtained from Lancashire. These, having come over the ridge of mountains from Lancashire, were called "ower t' top fowk."

They went back when the cotton trade became brisk again, carrying with them many tales about the inhospitable way in which they had been treated.

Industrialism, with all its cruelty and ugliness, found a welcome in this stern country. One thinks with wonder of people who, in spite of what the "blacklegs" from Lancashire said to the contrary, were hospitable, generous and affectionate, sending their own children at seven and eight years old to the mill. There are pathetic tales of these mites being dragged from their warm beds at five or half-past in the morning—before their eyelids would stay open—then walking knee deep, or waist high, through the snow, braving the terrors of dark

lonely lanes, or the greater terrors of the giant whirling wheels and belts overhead, in the dimly lighted mills. The working day for children from nine to sixteen years old was twelve working hours, and nine hours on Saturdays.

And away in London was Fergus O'Connor, with his monster petition shaped like a cart wheel, with its millions of signatures, asking for Universal Suffrage. Charlotte Brontë, whose sympathies had been stirred as a young girl at Roe Head by tales of the Luddite riots, was perhaps equally interested in the closely allied movement. Francis Butterfield, of Wilsden, a Quaker and an ardent Chartist, says that one afternoon she walked over from Haworth to consult him about writing a novel dealing with the Chartist movement. She stayed to tea, and they talked the matter over. He, however, advised her not to go on with the work. It was a subject, he said, likely to provoke bitter controversy, and might easily entail responsibilities she would not be equal to. There was another reason—she had Tory leanings, and might not have treated his beloved cause as sympathetically as he could have wished. He walked part of the way home with her, and they stayed for awhile, talking, at the stile which leads to the fields at Hallas Bridge.

The probability is that she would have treated it as a novelist rather than as a politician ; and a novelist must be as a god, she must be able to see life from every point of view with equal impartiality. If Charlotte Brontë's views at times were narrow politically and ecclesiastically, her sympathies where human suffering was concerned were usually swift and

sure. In *Jane Eyre* her efforts to do justice to the "peasants" when Jane is a teacher at Morton are rather laboured, but it was not only her first published book but, as the public is so apt to forget, particularly where she is concerned, a novelist does not of necessity express her own views through the mouths of her characters, even if they be the heroines.

It is particularly unfair to take Robert Moore's view as representative of her own, as some have done. If *Shirley* has a hero in the ordinary sense it is surely Louis Moore, though he comes so late in the book. A woman writer, at any rate, whose lovers love passionately seldom expresses her views even on politics or business through a man who puts his business before his love.

"I'll make my cloth as I please," says Robert Moore, to the starving weavers, "and according to the best lights I know. In its manufacture I will employ what means I choose. Whoever after hearing this shall dare to interfere with me may just take the consequences."

"It's out o' no ill-will that I am here, for my part," says William Farren, "it's just to mak' a effort to get things straightened, for they're sorely a-crooked. Ye see we're ill off, varry ill off: wer families is poor an' pined. We are thrown out o' work wi' these frames: we can get naught to do, we can earn naught. Mun we say wisht! an' lig us down an' dee? I'm not for shedding blood: I'd neither kill a man nor hurt a man; and I'm not for pulling down mills and breaking machines; for as ye say that way o' goin' on 'll never stop invention; but I'll talk! I'll mak' as big a din

as ever I can. Invention may be all right, but I know it isn't right for poor folk to starve. Them that governs mun find a way to help us : they mun mak' fresh orderations."

Moore's final word to this is :

"I will have my own way. I shall get new frames to-morrow. If you broke those I would get still more. *I'll never give in.*"

This is surely an artist sketching character rather than a politician airing her opinions.

Though her temperament and upbringing were against an intimate understanding of the peasantry, her position as a clergyman's daughter and Sunday School teacher, and her natural interest and sympathy, must have made her partly conversant with their circumstances during those lean years of the 'forties. During the "barley war" meal was fivepence a pound, and this at a time when a hard day's work only realized enough to buy two pounds of it. Bacon and potatoes and porridge was the staple diet for the "better class" working folk. To save fuel enough porridge was boiled in the morning to serve for two meals; that left over was poured, hot, into a bottle, then corked, and placed in the beds to keep warm until noon. Dry oatbread and a pint of mint tea, sweetened with treacle, was the usual evening meal.

The less fortunate lived on "porridge and stop." The whole of the meal in the house was cooked at one time, the family ate from it until it was finished, then, of necessity, stopped eating until more could be bought.

An old Thornton man, who lived through this time, said

that when a boy he was sent on an errand to the house of his master. On arriving home again he told his mother, in a tone of awe and amazement, that he had seen on the kitchen table a piece of currant bread—and *it was lying there without anybody eating it!*

Yet in the homes of most of these people, carefully put away in the cupboard, there would be a bit of sugar and a bit of tea, in readiness for possible company.

THORNTON—CENTRAL





KIPPING LANE, THORNTON

CHAPTER III

THORNTON—CENTRAL

IT has often been conjectured what the difference in the lives of the Brontës would have been if Miss Elizabeth Firth, with her sweet, sympathetic temperament, and her fortune, had married their father. It is said that she was asked in marriage by Patrick Brontë, after the death of his wife. She, however, married the Rev. J. C. Franks, the vicar of Huddersfield. There is a tablet to her memory in the new Thornton church.

Kipping House, where she lived, overlooks Bent Ing Fields. Here all the Brontës stayed for a fortnight, during the domestic upheaval preparatory to their removal to Haworth. A little diary that she kept showed that the Firths and the Brontës were great friends: almost every day there is an entry: "Tea at the Brontës'." "Mrs. and Mrs. Brontë and the children to tea." "At Ogden Kirk with the Brontës."

The friendship was evidently kept up after the Brontës left Thornton, for Mr. Brontë writes to her, years afterwards: "My happiest days were spent at Thornton. The last time I was there I travelled over some of my ancient paths, and thought of my dear wife and children, whom death had removed, and when I was in the church, and reflected that my beloved

friend, with whom I was wont to take sweet counsel, was beneath my feet sadness came over my heart. And afterwards, as I walked round your garden, I called to mind all my dear friends who were removed from thence by the vicissitudes of life, and I soon found the whole aspect of affairs to be entirely changed, so I returned home, fully intended to visit Thornton and Kipping no more unless I should be in a great measure forced by circumstances."

The house is said to be haunted by the ghost of a younger Miss Firth, who died a violent death by being thrown from her horse.

Kipping House is known in religious history as the home of the distinguished physician, Dr. Hall, a sanctuary during the time of the persecutions of the sixteenth century, when two thousand ministers, and more than sixty thousand people, because of their religion, were robbed of their possessions. Eight or ten thousand of them died in prison.

The little group at Kipping passed through all the troublous times. By the Act of Uniformity, passed in 1662, no dissenting minister could hold a religious service without the risk of a fine or imprisonment, and, by the Conventicle Act, if five persons, beyond those of the same household, should meet for religious worship every one of them should be liable to a fine of £5 or three months' imprisonment for a first offence, £10 for a second, and a third offence meant a fine of £100, or seven years' transportation to work as a slave in a West Indies plantation.

The old barn in Kipping Lane was built by Dr. Hall, in

1669, and was used for over a hundred years as a place of worship by the Thornton nonconformists. A licence was obtained in 1672, when the King granted the Royal Declaration of Indulgence, allowing nonconformists to worship under certain conditions. This Declaration was withdrawn two years later, and it was not until 1689 that, by the Toleration Act, the Protestant dissenters were allowed to worship in their own way without fear of being molested.

The Rev. Oliver Heywood kept an interesting diary : he was one of the ministers who had been turned out of their homes and parishes because conscience would not allow them to take the oath required of them by the Act of Uniformity. The following is an extract :

“ June 4, 1679. I went to Kipping, where Mr. Jolly was to preach. I prayed almost two hours, God did wonderfully assist. Mr. J. was about four hours in the work. God helped, blest be God.”

A brother minister, the Rev. Matthew Smith, writes :

“ Kipping, 10 at night. Bailiffs unweariedly diligent with warrants against us. September 5, Kipping 9 at night. Parliament meet in London. Parliament in Scotland makes it banishment or death to those that conform not, yet says they establish the protestant religion. 1683,—Kipping at 4 in the morning—Kipping at break of day.—Aug. 17, 1784. Mr. Heywood taken at five o'clock, A.M. William Naylor, and four with him in prayer with a sick man, are taken.”

Truly these were a people who throve on persecution. No wonder that when Patrick Brontë came to Thornton he found the village almost entirely nonconformist—dissent was

bred in their bones. The Act of Uniformity said they must attend the parish church at the times arranged by the Government—they met in barns and cellars at all hours of the night, prayed for hours at a stretch, and listened to sermons four hours long. They must assent to the Book of Common Prayer—they would have no book in their form of worship but the hymn book and the Bible. A people who, strangely enough, put on the shackles of industrialism almost without protest, but refused to shackle their brains with any belief not of their own choosing—who would have chosen to go to hell rather than be forced to go to heaven.

When the State ceased to interfere they began, equally fiercely, to resent other authority. The godly men at the head, sighing with relief that now they might begin to talk about right living in the more ordinary and quieter walks of life, were disturbed at their meditations by the thudding of the intellectual blows their deacons were hurling at each other; as though it were not enough that bands of professed atheists were meeting in the village, and challenging attention by saying that they, too, had a right to freedom of thought!

A group calling themselves Methodists began to meet at Close Head, and, later, built a chapel. Their neighbours called them “click ’ems”—probably because of their zeal in attempting to “click” (snatch) the sinner from the wrath to come.

Some of their members refused to conform to the autocracy of the pulpit, and, partly with their own hands, for they were poor men, built a place of worship for themselves, where they

could thrash out their own doctrines and their own system of government.

One "nonconformist," whose name has not been recorded in history, after listening for some time with growing dissatisfaction to the errors of doctrine in the church, resolved to start a chapel of his own. Gathering the little band which is ever ready to listen to a new prophet, even in Thornton, he decided that, as an anniversary meant a good collection, it would be a good plan to start with one. The anniversary, therefore, was held the following Sunday, in a house in Sapgate Lane, and the building was filled to its utmost capacity. Those standing outside, according to custom, dropped at least one coin into the box, and the collection was so good that they decided to have another anniversary the following Sunday. This they did, and the second was even better than the first, therefore they decided to have a third. After the third anniversary the funds were in such a flourishing condition that some of the members thought it justifiable to begin building a chapel. Others, however, of a more cautious turn, thought it advisable to wait, and the opinions expressed on both sides were so emphatic that the church meeting broke up in confusion.

During the week following the leader, after thinking the matter over, decided that a church built on dissension could not prosper. Therefore, as he was the self-appointed treasurer, he bought a horse and cart with the money, and started a green-grocery business, which kept him in comfort to the end of his days.

These men, born in a grim country, who built ugly houses, ugly mills, and ugly chapels, were not always averse to the ugly side of theology. Some of them, of the "chozzen, piked aht fro' t' rubbidge" talked with apparent relish about babes in hell a span long, and spoke with the fire of genius about the God of love who burned a soul in hell for ever, because it had not adopted a certain method of salvation. They "ransacked the Bible to rake the promises to themselves, and flung the curses to their neighbours."

But many of them would have died for a brother—they taught an ugly doctrine, and lived beautiful lives. And, on the whole, the Dantesque music was not without its pleasurable thrill of excitement, and passed over the heads of the younger generation fairly harmlessly, for through the thunderous discords there was an ever-recurring dominant note, which called to clean living, self-reliance, and justice to the weaker brother.

The Brontë sisters did not understand the dissenters. Emily gave us "Joseph," and as a creation we would not alter a single line of his drawing. But surely there was never quite such a mean, sour hypocrite, without one spark of humanity—unless it be the very dim one of his regard for the house of Earnshaw. Charlotte's crooked lines seem more deliberate. In the farcical contest between the two Whitsuntide processions her sympathies are clearly with the "church." There is her spirited defence in her letter to Ellen Nussey, during the fight at Haworth, when the dissenters refused to pay church rates, but it is on the lines of fair play

only. In her novels a Methodist, at best, is a noisy, narrow-minded crank. There is a "joined Methody" in *The Professor*. "Tim was a 'religious man' himself, indeed he was a 'joined Methodist,' which did not, be it understood, prevent him from being at the same time an ingrained rascal."

Barraclough, in *Shirley*, a dirty, sneering, whining, coarse, drunken swindler, makes us shudder without once raising a smile. He comes forward with raised hand and closed eyes, with his "Peace be unto you"—"a broad-shouldered fellow, distinguished no less by his demure face and cat-like, trustless eyes than by a wooden leg and stout crutch. There was a kind of leer about his lips, he seemed laughing in his sleeve at some person or thing." Then he tells us: "Praise God! Bless His name! I'm a joined Methody."

Dissent in Thornton may have bred such, but if so they have been, quite rightly, lost even to memory.

In one other respect Charlotte's remark about her sister Emily's lack of knowledge of the peasantry round her was largely true of them both. They, whose graces rather lacked the saving one of humour, did not see, or at least understand, the fund of humour that perpetually flowed from the working people round them. We enjoy our laugh at "Joseph," but he himself is as devoid of humour as "the gnarled and twisted hawthorn that grew near his abode."

The people of this barren country learn to laugh when life holds her gifts at arm's length, and to laugh again when the gifts are dashed to the ground, for their philosophy is that

there is always something better on in front. Nor does the laugh necessarily express defiance or triumph—it is more often a chuckle of delight, or a roar of merriment. In their grimmest, dreariest, saddest circumstances they find something to joke about.

The preacher who became popular seasoned his mixture of fire and brimstone with the salt of humour. He gave dramatic illustrations of the speed a sinner went to hell by himself sliding down the pulpit rail; one of them, on reading in the lesson Paul's declaration that he could do all things, put a five shilling piece on the Bible, and bet the Apostle a crown that he couldn't. But when Paul qualified his statement by adding, "through Christ who strengtheneth me," the preacher put the money back in his pocket, saying that was something he had not bargained for. A "local" said to his congregation: "If hearts had windows what a sale there would be in blinds!"

I remember one of them giving a vivid description of the plight of the Israelites when they reached the Red Sea. "The hills were on both sides of them, the Egyptians were behind them, the Red Sea in front—what wonder that they gave themselves up for lost! Ah!" he added, leaning over the pulpit rail, and speaking in a tense voice, "they had forgotten that the devil couldn't put a lid on!"

Kipping Lane leads to Market Street, once the centre of the life of the village. It was a street of twenty-three houses when the Brontës lived there. The "Bull's Head" Inn stands doggedly in the middle of the widened road, its back



THE BULL'S HEAD, THORNTON



to the "improvements," its face to the old street, where it must be dodged by the ever-increasing traffic. It is therefore to be pulled down when its licence runs out, and when that happens one of the few remaining bits of old Thornton will be gone. Behind the "Bull's Head," at a distance of a few yards, was the "Black Horse," in front was the "White Horse."

On Sunday mornings "Kippingers" came from miles around to the service at the chapel, heard a sermon lasting an hour or more, then went to the "Black Horse" for dinner, paying threepence-halfpenny for "a mess o' broth an' a pint o' ale." There they stayed, smoking and discussing the affairs of life, until time for the afternoon service.

At this time there were two shops in the village. Jonas Robinson, "t'owd butcher," had one. It is said that, at Thornton Tide, he "killed a whole cow," a statement which leaves us with a harrowing picture of his cows at any other time of the year. Mally Adams' little shop was opposite the "White Horse." One day she went to Bradford, and was so impressed by the "set out" in the windows that she decided to startle Thornton by a set out of her own. After buying six pairs of kippers and a dozen oranges she placed the kippers flat against the window, crossed, put an orange between each pair, and a row of oranges behind. So wonderful was the result that she spent the greater part of the day in walking to and fro in front of the window. One dame from Hill Top hurried home and told the rest of the family that they must go at once to look at Mally Adams' window, for they had never seen such a set out in their lives.

Shop was added to shop, and a butcher followed Jonas Robinson, who ran down a hay fork with a field on his back, or so he said, and once, in a tremendous hurry, told a boy he met that if he would catch that penny there would be a bull for him. He it was who lost a ha'penny on every pound of meat he sold, therefore must sell a lot or he'd go bankrupt.

There was a milliner's shop kept by a lady who, she affirmed, when a girl at Halifax made the bonnet that Charlotte Brontë wore when she went to London the first time. It was of black velvet. The velvet was sent by Miss Brontë, and had been used previously for another purpose, the marks of the stitchings remained.

This lady was also a draper, and noted for the quality of her goods. A few weeks ago a woman went into a shop in Keighley, with a stocking in her hand. She told the shopman that she had knitted the stocking over forty years ago, from wool bought at Mrs. C——'s, at Thornton—probably he would know her? The leg was still good, and if she could get some wool to match she would re-foot the stocking. The shopman, after an examination, gravely said that he might satisfy her with the colour, but was doubtful about being able to match the quality, as the wool made for stockings in these degenerate days could not be guaranteed to wear more than a couple of years, at the most.

Probably every new movement which did not spend its early days in the "Athenæum" in Industry Street was started "at t' top o' t' tahn"—in front of the "Bull's Head" Inn. The pulpit was a chair, the congregation stood about, or sat on the

low wall of the inn. It was often thin, for Thornton folk, as a whole, don't take kindly to new ideas.

From there can be seen the whole of Market Street—which used to be a gay sight at Thornton Tide. It was then lined with stalls, and by that time, perhaps taking their cue from Mally Adams, the shopkeepers had learnt how to “set out.” A stranger would have been surprised at the number of the toy stalls, if he did not know that toys were bought twice a year only, at Christmas and Thornton Tide, and that children were taught to save their weekly spending money of a half-penny, or in luxurious homes a penny, for these two great occasions. Fathers and mothers, their excited families around them, would walk from top to bottom of Market Street, probably coming back to the first stall before choosing the toys, buy a fairing of brandysnap and nuts, then go to the real Tide, swings and roundabouts, pea-saloons and shows, “at t' back o' Jim Northrop's” and in the “Black Horse” yard.

But the Tide grew swollen in its pride, and had to move to a large field, and there it received its death blow. The people who lived near objected to the incessant blare of the trumpets. Crestfallen, it crept to the back of the “New Inn,” where it now abjectly grinds along for a day, or so, a year. The place is so small that the people who go there in a wistful search for lost romance, if they do not walk on each other's heads, walk on each other's heels and toes, go round in a circle for a time or two, then buy a pound of brandysnap at the stall at the top, then go home talking of the good old days that are no more.

The Rev. Joseph Thwaites, who died some sixteen years

before Patrick Brontë came to Thornton, caused a Resolution to be passed at a vestry meeting which throws a light on the state of the morals of the village at that time :

“ No publican shall sell beer, &c. after 10 p.m. weekdays—feast days excepted : nor before 12 p.m. on Sundays, nor between 2 and 4, nor after 8 p.m. except to travellers. All persons found ‘ tippling ’ to be presented to the magistrate. That all races, trails, bull-baiting, cock-fighting, gambling, &c. be ‘ let up.’ That no butcher kill or sell on Sunday, and that no baker sell bread on that day except between the hours of 12 and 2.”

Bull-baiting was abolished in England about 1828. It comes as something of a shock to learn that there was need to stop this “ sport ” at Thornton. The cock-pit was in Black Dyke Lane, near Egypt, but if there were bull-baiting it would probably be in the centre of the village. A writer in the *Yorkshire Magazine* in 1872 says :

“ The bull was fastened to a stake by a chain, which extended to about fifteen yards in length, and terminated in a very strong leather collar, passing round his neck, his horns being previously muffled at the points with a composition of tow, tallow and melted pitch. The attack was then commenced with dreadful noises of different kinds—bellowings, hootings, huzzaings, and all the discordant noises which human savagery could invent, or as if pandemonium had been emptied of its occupants for the occasion. Whatever could be brought to bear upon the poor animal to work it into a state of fury was used ; missiles were aimed at him in front, and he was punctured with sharp-pointed sticks, and irritated with repeated twists of the tail behind. The irritation being

judged sufficient a single bulldog was first let loose upon the prey, and if he was found incapable of pinning him by the nose to the ground he was soon assisted by a second : and when these were tired or gored other dogs, howling and impatient of control, were let loose in their turn, till the poor exhausted captive fainted beneath the protracted attack."

At a little distance from "T' top o' t' tahn," standing a little way back from the street, is a house of many windows, once called "The Star Inn," but better known as "t' Coffin End." It is shaped like the end of a coffin. In the street above, in the old days called New Halifax, lived Mick o' David's. Mick had an objection to paying rent, therefore did not live on good terms with his landlord. After his furniture had been taken away once or twice Mick saw the foolishness of buying more, and, instead, brought home from the quarry five large stones. Four of these he erected, perpendicularly, making a square receptacle, and into this he put the food and other household necessities, then covered them with the fifth stone, thus making a table. The seats were blocks of wood.

There was also a woman, in another part of Thornton, who had the same desire to live rent free. The first bailiff went to the door rather tentatively, for he had been told that his reception would be warm. To his surprise Nell, who was sharpening a great carving knife at the sink, looked up calmly enough, and asked him to come in and sit down. When he was seated she said, agreeably :

" Did anybody see you come in ? "

" No—I don't know," said the puzzled bailiff, " why ? "

“ Because there’s nobody going to see you go out,” she said, suddenly fierce, and brandishing the huge knife in his face.

It is not on record whether anybody did see him go out or not, but he went.

The second bailiff was received quite as cordially, and shown into a room behind the kitchen. He began to have misgivings when he heard the key turn in the lock, but when he found that the room had been previously let to a nest of wasps, who resented the intrusion, he fled by the window. She was afterwards left in peace until her family were old enough to take matters into their own hands. And a fine family it was that she reared : by some means she managed to give them what was considered a good education in those days, and most of them inherited their mother’s fire, and turned it to good account.

A few yards away from “ Coffin End ” is the old parsonage, where four of the Brontë children were born : it has been described in every book which has been written about the Brontës. The added portion at the front, however, is no longer a butcher’s shop : in winter it is empty, but in summer it is used for the sale of ice cream. The house itself, as many another in these days, shelters two families. The tenants are kindness itself in showing what is to be seen of Brontë interest, but the tenacity with which visitors cling to the idea that it is not a private house but a public museum, every room of which is open to inspection, sometimes causes embarrassing situations.

There is still the old fireplace in the room behind the shop,



COFFIN END, THORNTON



where Charlotte was born. The bars are in a shaky condition, but the landlord listens with horror to any suggestion that the grate should be exchanged for a new one. The ironwork at one time would probably interest the baby Brontës. It is decorated with rabbits; on one side is a little naked boy playing a flute, on the other his brother, holding an instrument like a mandolin. One ardent worshipper knelt down and kissed their shining black bodies.

The grandmother of one of the tenants lived at Haworth, and was one of the scholars of Charlotte Brontë.

In the days of the Rev. George Thomas, B.A., who lived there about 1839, it was visited by the Thornton robbers, a band of lawless inhabitants who were difficult to catch because the constable himself was amongst them. They turned up unexpectedly, with masked faces, at dead of night. The curate had taken the precaution to hide his money under the mattress, but when he awoke one Sunday morning he found not only an empty "Dorcas box" but an empty cellar. The robbers had taken every scrap of food, and, as it was the Sabbath, he could not buy any, therefore had to preach without his breakfast. By noon, however, the tale had spread, and enough food had reached the parsonage to keep the family for a week.

There is also a story reminiscent of the hard times of the 'forties. "Ignorant fowk thro' Oxenhope an' Haworth" used to come to Thornton, run past Mr. Thomas's door and back again, shouting "Moar cake an' less parsons!—Moar cake an' less parsons!"

THORNTON—NORTH





THE HAUNTED HOUSE, STREAM HEAD, THORNTON

CHAPTER IV

THORNTON—NORTH

" 'Twas just the time of eve
When parted ghosts might come
Above their prisoned dust to grieve,
And wail their woeful doom.

" And truly at my side
I saw a shadowy thing,
Most dim, and yet its presence there
Curdled my blood with ghastly fear
And ghastlier wondering.

" I fell down on the stone
But could not turn away;
My words died in a voiceless moan
When I began to pray.

" And still it bent above,
Its features full in view.
It seemed close by, and yet more far
Than this world from the farthest star
That tracks the boundless blue.

" Indeed 'twas not the space
Of earth or time between,
But the sea of deep eternity,
The gulf o'er which mortality
Has never, never been."

(EMILY BRONTË.)

MRS. GASKELL says :

" All the grim superstitions of the north had been implanted in Charlotte Brontë during her childhood by the servants who believed in them. They recurred to her now with no shrinking from the spirits of the dead, but with

such an intense longing once more to stand face to face with the souls of her sisters, as no one but she could have felt. It seemed as if the very strength of her yearning should have compelled them to appear. On windy nights cries, and sobs, and wailings seemed to go round the house, as of the dearly beloved striving to force their way to her. Some one conversing with her once objected, in my presence, to that part of *Jane Eyre* in which she hears Rochester's voice crying out to her in a great crisis of her life, he being many, many miles distant at the time. I do not know what incident was in Miss Brontë's recollection when she replied, in a low voice, drawing in her breath, 'But it is a true thing; it really happened.'"

In her novels, as well as in her poetry, she loved to linger on the borderland between spirit and matter. Jane Eyre, the child locked in the red-room at Gateshead Hall, aching with a sense of injustice, began to recall what she had heard of dead men, troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes, revisiting the earth to punish the perjured and avenge the oppressed: "and I thought Mr. Reed's spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sister's child, might rise before me in this chamber. I wiped my tears and hushed my sobs, fearful lest any sign of violent grief might waken a preternatural voice to comfort me, or elicit from the gloom a haloed face, bending over me with strange pity. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot, a sound filled my ears which I deemed the rushing of wings, something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated, endurance broke down."

Later, when she is recovering from her fit of unconscious-

ness, she hears the servants whispering together : “ Something passed her all dressed in white and vanished ”—“ a great black dog behind him ”—“ Three loud raps on the chamber door ”—“ A light in the churchyard, just over his grave.”

Mr. Rochester’s return to Thornfield Hall is heralded by a Gytrash, “ a lion-like creature with long hair and a huge head : it passed me, however, quietly enough, not staying to look up, with strange preternatural eyes, in my face, as I half expected.”

And we have all trembled with Lockwood, in that haunted bedroom at Wuthering Heights, and watched Heathcliff, fascinated, when the teasing, tormenting, mischievous, alluring Catherine had come back to him.

“—I put a basin of coffee before him. He drew it nearer, and then rested his arms on the table, and looked at the opposite wall, as I supposed, surveying one particular portion, up and down, with glittering restless eyes, and with such eager interest that he stopped breathing during half a minute together.

“ Now I perceived he was not looking at the wall—it seemed exactly that he gazed at something within two yards distance. And whatever it was it communicated, apparently, both pleasure and pain in exquisite extremes : at least the anguished yet raptured expression of his countenance suggested that idea.”

At the time that these books were written Thornton children also heard their elders whispering about great black dogs, three loud raps on chamber doors, mysterious lights hovering over graves, and pictures jumping agitatedly from

the walls and back again. All, except the great black dog, were sinister signs. In other parts of Yorkshire the visit of the Gytrash was a sign of death, but here, so far as I can learn, it was a terror in itself, but was not associated with mortal disaster. I have heard a woman, who had read none of the Brontë books, give an account as vivid as Jane Eyre's of a similar experience in her own bedroom, some time after she had lost her mother.

Women "witched" cows and pigs by "wishing," caused children to be born with club feet and sightless eyes, brought on fevers and paralysis, and, with the evil eye, brought about all kinds of domestic and financial trouble.

It has been said that the legend has the merit of seizing nothing but the purely human content of the age and nation in which it occurs. It is like a bit of nature, it is not a construction—it grew so, like a tree, and it is for us to realize what it holds of greatness, of depth or of significance.

For some reason difficult to explain the legend and the ghost tale left Thornton, Wilsden and Cullingworth very reluctantly, whilst at Oxenhope and Haworth the only trace is to be found in books. We must believe Mrs. Gaskell and the other historians that they were there—Horsfall Turner tells us some of them—but there is no remnant left in the people themselves. The oldest of the inhabitants not only deny that they have ever believed in ghosts, but that their forefathers ever did. It is difficult to make them confess that there have ever been any ghost stories. On the other hand, the Thornton, Cullingworth and Wilsden folk, though

obviously incredulous, half wish that the tales were true : in fact there are people still left who believe that they are. Wilsden and Cullingworth are approaching the softer, wooded part of the country, but Thornton is of the same type as Haworth itself, and, in most respects, its people are the same.

The Thornton ghosts seem to have sought the northern slope of the valley, and have stopped there even until the present day, in spite of the attempts of the farmers to make the place prosaic by calling their homesteads " Salt Pie," and " Mustard Pot," and " Honey Pot "—and one private house " Who-Could-Have-Thought-It? " Even the Bloody-tongue, after being turned out of his familiar haunts at Bent Ing, apparently turned instinctively to the north.

If, as Mrs. Gaskell suggested, the Brontë children listened with straining ears to the ghost lore told by the servants to each other, it is almost certain that Maria and Elizabeth, at least, heard the story of Fair Becca at Pitty Beck, for Pitty Beck is less than a mile away from their old home, and the people of their day would walk a long way round rather than pass the little bridge at nightfall.

Why poor Becca should wander nightly from Lidget Green to Pitty Beck at Thornton is difficult to say, but perhaps a mile or two is not of much account to a ghost. All we know about it is that everybody in the village born before School Boards dug Becca's grave afresh, agree that she did come. There does not seem to be an absolutely authenticated version of her story, but James Burnley's is thrilling enough.

Fair Becca, he tells us, one fateful May was chosen queen, and was the fairest of the many beautiful maidens who danced round the maypole at Fairweather Green. Or so thought the young squire, and though humble was her station he led off the dance with her. When the festivities were over the two

“ Went off the green side by side
And away to the cottage at Four Lane Ends,
Where the road breaks up into several bends,
And where the good father and mother resided.”

In spite of Colin, the unhappy lover in the background, who seems to have spent his time in clenching his fist, matters went on their blissful way until Christmas. Then complications arose in the shape of an heiress, whom the old squire wished his son to marry. The young squire was nothing loth, but whenever the two took a tender walk in the grounds, Fair Becca would appear, most inopportunately, and ask when he was going to meet her.

Becoming tired of this, he at last made an appointment with her for the following night in Hollingwood. And there

“ They met with a kiss as in days of old,
And round her neck his arm did fold,
As of love and honour he falsely told.

“ At last Fair Becca in fondest dream
Was led full slowly and tenderly back
Through the quiet wood, o’er the snowy track,
Until they came to a purling stream.

“ Arrived at this spot the squire looked round
And saw not a thing and heard not a sound,
For all was wrapt in silence profound.”

Then the heartless villain

“ —Dragged his victim over the stream,
And, ere she could utter a second scream,
He plunged her in— ! ”

Thinking that at last the course was clear, he hurried back to the Hall, and, taking his new love outside again, began to talk about the wedding. Then, just as midnight boomed,

“ —what a sight there loomed
On the eyes of young Blight,
Who saw all in white
Something so pale that no horrid
Vision could ever have chilled with affright.
'Twas Rebecca—— ! ”

That night a yeoman, returning late to his home, saw on the bridge at Hollingwood Beck the ghost of Rebecca the Fair, and when, later, Colin and his friends set out with torches and bludgeons and lanterns, they dragged the beck, and there found her body.

His courage now aroused, and strengthened by the throng that grew as he went along, Colin valiantly set out for the Hall. And at the sight of his face the squire fled—to Hollingwood Beck. There he “ took a sharp leap,” and committed suicide.

“ And since the time of this ghastly crime
Whoever at midnight has passed this place
Has seen Fair Becca in ghostly grace
Flit slowly before him, with palléd cheek,
And heard her utter a warning shriek.”

If Pitty Beck, which is part of the beck in Bell Dean valley, be followed westward it leads eventually to Stream

Head. And here, in a tiny cottage, is a place where one ghost is laid only to make way for another. The first story is of a sick girl, who, every night, heard the sound of horses' feet tramping across the bedroom floor. Her mother went to consult a "medium" in Bradford, who asked if it were not true that an old man had lived in the house. Upon being answered in the affirmative she said that the old man had hid a box of money under the third stone from the fireplace, on the kitchen floor. On arriving home she must lock the door and pull down the blind, then take up this flag, and she would find the gold.

The woman carried out the instructions—at least she pulled down the blind, and pulled up the flag. And, sure enough, there was the box! But, alas! she had omitted one important detail of the instructions—she had forgotten to lock the door! And just as she was stooping to pick up the box, the door opened, and in came an old gipsy woman. Then the box with its gold sank lower and lower until it went out of sight altogether.

That night the noise in the bedroom was worse than ever.

"Can't you hear it, mother?" asked the girl.

"No," said the mother.

"It's louder than ever—and there's an awful voice saying: 'There's no rest here! There's no rest here!'"

Next day the mother went house hunting, and did not rest until they had left the place of dread. The removal was speeded by the visit of a horned, cloven-hoofed gentleman, who called at the door one day at nightfall, to ask for a match!

Queerly enough three families attribute their removal from this cottage to ghosts—every ghost being a different one. One man, every time he happened to go home late, found an old woman sitting in the armchair on the hearth; another affirms that, one Friday night, a litter of pigs came down the chimney. But this was not so good a thing as it appears, for they vanished as they came. A later tenant says that every Friday night something happened, either mysterious knocking or a ghostly appearance of some kind.

Over the hill to the north, two miles nearer Haworth, is the witch of Hallas Bridge. She is supposed to haunt the steep lane on the Cullingworth side of the beck, and is creeping down the hill at the rate of seven straw-breadths a year. When at last she reaches the bridge she will wave her hand, and the hill, with every house and person on it, will disappear.

But this valley begins to smile as it approaches Bingley, and is therefore inhabited by gentler spirits. On moonlight nights, on Deep Cliff, where their antics are partly hidden by trees, the fairies come out. Evidently they are of a domestic turn, for the keen-eyed of the mortals have seen what look like white garments hung out on the trees. But after work comes play, and they dance to the clanging of musical tongs—and prove to the doubting mortal that they have been by leaving behind them a magic ring of toadstools.

Turning south again we come back to the grim element. The Thornton robbers also liked this district. A man who lived at Stream Head kept them at bay with a gun, and a woman at Spring Holes did the same. Her husband was the

overseer, and, one afternoon, told her that he had business at a distance which would keep him away for the night.

"T' robbers 'll come," she said, "an' we've all that brass in t' haase."

He laughed at her fears, but she was so sure that, as soon as he had gone, she took up the kitchen grate, which was used for sifting the ashes, and buried the money.

At about ten o'clock at night she heard a noise at the door, then a voice demanding that it should be unlocked.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"If tha doesn't oppen it I s'all break it in!" threatened the voice.

She then took the gun from the rafters, went behind the door, and said: "T' first 'at comes I s'all shoit!—an' I s'all shoit to kill.—*I s'all shoit to kill!*" she repeated, as the noise at the door became more pronounced.

After a little low-toned conversation outside she heard a cautious trying of the front door, so, leaving the dog on guard at the back, she went to the front, and shouted through the keyhole: "I s'all shoit to kill!"

None of them cared to put her to the test, evidently, for after a time they went away. When her husband returned the following day he said, laughing: "Now then, tha'rt all reight, tha sees!"

"Aye," she said, "but they've been."

"What!" he said, in alarm, "—an' ta'en t' brass!"

"Nowe," she said, calmly, "it's in t' as'hoil" (hole for the ashes).



THE ROAD TO HALLAS BRIDGE



In Black Dyke Lane, a little way south of Stream Head, there is another haunted house. There are still, at times, mysterious knockings which cannot be accounted for. The ghost is said to be that of a farmer who once lived there. Contemplating marriage at one time, and believing that it is wise to look before leaping, he decided to find out what marriage would cost. For a week, therefore, he bought twice as much food as usual, and set half apart. At the end of the week, after checking the outlay, he shook his head, and said: "This 'll never do! I mun ha' noan o' this." (I must have none of this.)

So he gave up his prospective bride, who eventually married another farmer, and, we believe, lived happy ever after. He fell off a haystack and was killed. Perhaps it is the money he left that he is seeking with his ceaseless tapping, for he left a great deal.

At Hill Top, still further south, there is another house which at one time was said to be haunted. After several years one braver than the rest made investigations, and found a cellar underneath the cellar, which at one time had evidently been used for illicit distilling. Rats in the under-cellar was deemed a sufficient explanation of the ghost. But there is one story, told as fact, which cannot be explained by rats. One morning, as the father knelt at prayer, with his family round him, he heard the sound of heavy feet coming up the cellar steps. As nobody was known to be in the cellar he stopped his prayer, and waited. The feet stopped at the head of the stairs, and as the door did not open the man of

the house went to open it. There was nobody there. After the door was closed again the footsteps went back into the cellar. All the family said that they heard the noise, and there was never any explanation found.

Between thirty and forty years ago a ghost of a more harmful kind haunted this region. Tales were told of a man with horns, and one girl was literally frightened out of her wits, and afterwards died. There was evidence that a man, for some strange reason, had gone about the fields and lonely lanes dressed in a cow's skin and horns.

Policemen were put on special duty. One of them, "Long Joe," wandered about the district dressed in women's clothes. But he stood over six feet high, and perhaps a woman so tall frightened even the horned man himself, for he was never caught.

THORNTON—WEST





WALLS OF JERICO, EGYPT, THORNTON

CHAPTER V

THORNTON—WEST

IN the excitement of the hunt for ghosts and robbers we have missed an interesting part of Thornton—Egypt. The little chapel, a United Methodist church, lies snugly in the hollow, sheltered by the hills. When Shillicake Wood was standing this was a picturesque spot, the home of the thrush and the blackbird. From the opposite hill the wood could be seen from above, the tops of the trees billowing in the wind, with the sound of an incoming tide on a breezy day. The wood was supposed to be private, but only the timid kept out on that account; so far as I can learn there was no “Old Ike” in the background, with his whip.

It is now a memory only, of picnics, with a pot of tea from the whitewashed cottage in the clearing, or, if the needful penny were not forthcoming, as often happened when it took a fortnight to save so much, there was always water in the beck. A memory of droning bees and spiteful wasps, frightened beetles and busy ants, of bluebells and blackberries, and wild raspberries that made delicious puddings, and heps and haws, and burrs that stuck most usefully to the coats of pretty girls, thus making an opportunity for conversation when youth was shy. Of long, long days when the sun never

set, and never a cloud but fleecy ones reached the sky, when the stones in the beck cut one's toes, and the sun-warmed water cured them again. Of bird-nesting and scratched shins, of surreptitious hunts for November logs and Christmas "wassail bobs."

As though this wood, the one bit of soft beauty in a land of stone, were out of place, it has been cut down. We learnt to be patient about many things during the war, but the Thornton people in general thought that their one little wood might have been spared—even though timber was fetching a higher price then than it might ever do again. The spot where it stood, now covered with tree stumps sticking helplessly out of the ground, is a picture of desolation, though spring does its best to cover up the scars with bracken and bluebells. The opposite hill, a delightful playground for children who have passed the age when a fall or two matters, is of no commercial value, and has therefore been left alone. It is still a wild spot, with bits of heather, bilberry bushes, bracken and broken stone.

The view looking south, from the rise behind the chapel, is typical of the district. Banks of "scraplings" and hills covered with shale; on the right huge cranes silhouetted against the sky, below them giant blocks of stone. Everywhere ragged stone walls; a few stunted trees left in the valley mourning the fate of their fallen comrades.

The chapel itself was built by quarrymen and farmers. The road from Wilsden, by Dean Lane Head, passes close by as it moves towards Thornton, and at this point is remarkable

for its walls. They are of a great height, and to walk between them in the dark, or on a moonlight night, gives one an eerie feeling. The name sometimes given them, "The walls of Jericho," is appropriate; if Gideon's trumpet were to blow one would certainly prefer to be on the outside.

At the top of the road, where the grand Bell Dean quarries come into view, the psychologist may begin to understand whatever may have puzzled or interested him in the people of Thornton—for it is in the quarry that their forefathers were reared. Here they hammered out a philosophy as hard as the stone they hewed; in the silence of the quarry they thought out sermons which they walked twenty miles to deliver—and set the countryside ablaze. Others, to whom that type of religion did not appeal, sharpened their wits by repartee until they were as keen as their chisels. Made stoical by the weather, they were as patient as the fisherman whose life is ruled by the tide. For there were months of white mornings when the quarryman's wife pulled aside her blind to ask what of the day, then whipped the sadness from her face as she went downstairs to make porridge from the meal which had added to the long score at the grocer's: when the delver joined his fellow workman on the hearth, and cracked his endless jokes as his ears strained for the first moan of the thaw wind. Made thrifty by the necessity to save for the winter, they kept up the habit when the earnings of the grown-up family made it no longer necessary: a generous folk and a kindly, as people usually are where familiarity with hardship and poverty has bred contempt.

The quarry bred a contempt for danger, too. There was once an occasion at this quarry when a preacher and a professed atheist almost fought for the chance to risk life for the salvage of a quarry engine. The rationalist said that as he had only two children and the other had four it was his right, the preacher said that, as foreman of the quarry, the responsibility was his—it was his duty.

By some argument or other the atheist won, and the engine was saved, happily without loss of life.

This district plays pranks with the map, for after leaving Egypt behind we may be at Moscow after a quarter of an hour's walk, and, by still going forward, reach Jerusalem in five minutes.

A mile or so north-west is "Johnny Queer Moor." Johnny Queer was a bachelor, who enclosed a bit of wild land, built a house on it, which he cleaned himself, washed, baked, and kept pigs and hens and a cow or two. He further added to the interest of life by being different from his neighbours. One of the queer things he did was to stop in the middle of a tale he was telling, jump over the table with all it contained, and back again, then solemnly resume the story where he had left off.

At Hill Top and Wells Heads we are at the extreme west of Thornton, and within sight of the gloom of the moors, miles of grey and black and brown, with a suggestion of purple in autumn. Here, too, if there be a gale, we get the full benefit of it. I have heard old women tell of the days "when lasses weren't as praad as they are nahdays." On a

windy night they would go to the hill tops, unloosen their hair, spread out their arms, and fly on the wings of the wind, shouting for the sheer joy of life.

Denholme Gate is between Thornton and Thornton Moor, and Denholme, with an air of surprise at being there, lies in the valley to the north, in the hollow of the hills, like an island in a sea of green stone-edged fields. North and west are moors, and east, too, heather is still to be found.

There is a certain fascination about an industrial village. It is not beautiful, the average house looks as though the tenant, having got a job one day, built himself a house during the night, and, taking thought for the early morning sprint when he heard the factory whistle, built the house close to the road, to save the extra stride down a garden path. At times, indeed, he saved himself even the trouble of a causeway.

Though the people seem quiet enough, at first sight, there is an impression of alert busyness about the place, not quite accounted for by the hum of the mill. Closed doors have the mysterious look of being able to tell a great deal if they would, open doors reveal tantalizing half pictures of cleanly homeliness : a dresser with strange-looking ornaments, on the wall pictures with a story, shining black grates and a roaring fire, an appetizing meal on the table in the middle of the floor. The Friday night newly swilled flags and scoured steps hint at preparations for something important ; at a quarter past five the road, black with a swarm of hurrying figures, suggests something ahead more important than tea.

Even the quiet of the Sunday evening is disturbed by the restless smoke curling up from the mill chimney.

Though the original industry of Denholme was mining, it may be considered to be one of the villages which have grown up round one mill. It lies on the high road, remote and lonely, as though undecided whether to go on to Keighley, plod over the moor to Halifax, or turn east to Bradford. After its success in incorporating Thornton, Bradford beckoned, imperiously, but though Denholme raised itself reluctantly to obey, the Government gave it leave to stay a while longer as an individuality, and it has settled down again frankly "Yorkshire," rather shy, rather obstinate, proudly independent.

From the top of the winding road it is easy to hark back to the days spoken of by William Cudworth, when Denholme was a deer park :

"In the palmy days of the Tempests what stirring scenes must have been witnessed from Denholme Edge, or even from what is now the village street—the arrival of the merry host with his guests and numerous followers, the cheery notes of the hunters 'whose bugles did echo, did echo'—the chase, the slaughter, and the triumphant return to Bolling Hall."

And Denholme, it is said, was lost to the Tempests by one throw of the dice.

We can see the few houses slowly building to find shelter for the miners, then the coming of the Foster family from Hebden Bridge, with work for the handloom weavers in Denholme and the countryside.



DENHOLME CHURCH



The mill is a veritable village in itself. For two or three hours one may wander through mazes of machinery, flapping belts and revolving wheels.

The old tales of Denholme are redolent of the days when the moor air and moor life bred strong men and women. A man, walking along Ten Yards Lane, on his way to Thornton, was stopped by two others, who gave him the choice between his money and his life. Money was scarce, and life was precious, therefore, like the idiot boy who was asked to choose between a half sovereign and a penny, he chose both. Taking each man by the collar he put them both on the ground, placed a hefty knee on their chests to keep them there, then struck a match to look at their faces. After recognizing them he lifted them up, shook them, then took them by the scruff of their necks with him to Thornton, blubbering and begging not to be locked up.

Another man walked to Leeds, one Sunday, a distance of fourteen or fifteen miles, to hear a popular preacher. After the morning service he took his dinner of bread and cheese to a public house, and bought a pint of beer. Arriving back at Denholme, when he was climbing "T' Weary Braah" he remembered that the penknife he had used for cutting his bread and cheese had been left on the table of the public house in Leeds. Therefore, without troubling to call at home, he turned round, fetched his knife, and arrived home again at some time in the morning, after a walk of over sixty miles.

At the time of handloom weaving, when warps and pieces

were carried from the master's house to the home of the weaver, there was a woman lived on these moors whose real name was Grace Southwell, but she was better known as "Packhorse," for she carried these pieces on her back for hire. Another strong woman lived a few miles away, at an even later day. When she was seventy she could lift a pack of flour about easily, and she once left the home of a daughter, where she was staying on a visit, because the folk, though they went to bed as early as twelve at night, wouldn't get up until six in the morning, and she was wearied to death "o' liggin' i' bed." One day a man rather less drunk than her husband played the Good Samaritan, and saw him home, then, as a reward for his labours, insisted upon staying the night. The woman showed him the door, and as he would take no notice of hints she dragged him there, opened it, and threw him across the road.

As it happened, the woman who lived opposite was just opening her own door, and the man went with such a force that he fell in. She lifted him up and threw him out into the road, where he sat for a moment in a daze, then got up and walked sadly away.

"That man came tumblin' against my door," explained the second woman, looking after him in perplexity.

"He did," agreed the first, "I threw him."

From Denholme we may reach Haworth by going forward to Cullingworth, or by taking "t' Long Caus'ay" and getting directly on to Thornton Moor. From there we may take the road northward, getting immediately to Oxenhope, or by





OGDEN KIRK

turning south walk over the stretch of moor to Ogden and Halifax.

There are times when it would seem that the spirit of the Brontë country had been driven away from our villages. Trams and trains carry the people of Thornton to colour and beauty in the concert hall and theatre, electric lights frighten away the darkness. It is with drawn curtains and a blazing fire that we now try to get the thrill when reading of Catherine's fingers scratching at the window pane.

But up here, a mile or so away, where the heather still lies, in the hollow of a giant quarry, or behind a gaunt tree, we suddenly see a face, and a "head, savage, swart, sinister, a form moulded with at least one element of grandeur—power. Colossal, dark, frowning—terrible and goblin." We may turn from the sounds of the hammer on the chisel, the drone of the braked waggon, the throb and bang of the loom, and the factory siren, to the soft low sounds of the moor, the rustle of heather, and the cry of the curlew.

The moor has its September days, when the wind caresses the billowing purple sea, or its days of late spring, when miles of silver cotton grass glitter in the sun. But he who would meet the spirit face to face must go when the menacing sky presses ever downward, when the wind rushes past with the howl of a Gytrash, and the stream tinkles coldly along through grey grass and black heather. If he be accepted as kin he will press forward, exultant, if not he will turn in dread, and the driving, contemptuous rain will speed his return to civilization.

Or let him go when the frost is nipping his fingers, and the snow has levelled the ground until he cannot tell whether at the next step he will be buried to the waist or neck; when the white wild, which only an alien speaks of as desolate, stretches from horizon to horizon, and shuts him into a world of his own.

“ The night is darkening round me,
The night winds coldly blow;
But a tyrant spell has bound me,
And I cannot, cannot go.

“ The giant trees are bending,
Their bare boughs weighed with snow,
The storm is fast descending,
And yet I cannot go.

“ Clouds beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below;
But nothing dread can move me—
I will not, cannot go.”

(EMILY BRONTË.)

THE MOORS





HAWORTH MOOR

CHAPTER VI

THE MOORS

A CORPORATION road sets out for a given place, and points to its destination in a business-like manner with finger-posts; a moorland road, a track made by the restless search of wandering feet, jumps up unexpectedly from behind a rock or a clump of heather, then darts off, running until it reaches the top of the next rise, where it stops for a moment to turn and beckon. We follow, stumbling up the hills, dipping into valleys, through bog and beck into the sunset, dropping at last, breathless and exhausted—to find that it is still beckoning, impatient and imperious, from a hill a mile away. Then, after resting for a while in the silence, we find it lying quietly at our feet; for it is part of the eternal quest, which is for-ever fulfilling itself, yet is never fulfilled.

Ruskin knew the winds of a Yorkshire moor. He had felt the wind on the great heights of the Alps in rough weather, he said, and the strong gusts of storm in the plains of the south, but to get full expression of the very heart and meaning of wind there is no place like a Yorkshire moor. "I think Scottish breezes are thinner, very bleak and piercing, but not substantial. If you lean on them they will let you fall, but one may rest against a Yorkshire breeze, as one would against a quickset hedge."

Charlotte Brontë's pen painted wind, and at the same time expressed the moods of her heroines, and the many moods of the moor so familiar to a moor lover. Jane Eyre, a lonely little figure in the schoolroom, the first evening at Lowood School, "lifted the blind and looked out. It snowed fast, a drift was already forming against the lower panes; putting my ear close to the window I could distinguish from the fearful tumult within the disconsolate moan of the wind outside. Reckless and feverish I wished the wind to howl more wildly, the gloom to deepen to darkness, and the confusion to rise to clamour." She describes the return over an exposed and hilly road, at the close of the dreary Sunday afternoon service, when Mr. Brocklehurst had been preaching, where the bitter wind, blowing over a range of snowy summits to the north, almost flayed the skin from their faces.

At Thornfield Hall, goaded by Rochester's attempt to rouse jealousy so that, as he said, he might make her love him even as she was loved, Jane threw out her challenge of equality, and Rochester replied by asking her to marry him. Unbelieving, she defies him, and he asks her to be still a moment, until she is calmer. And in that moment of silence a waft of wind whispers a warning: it comes sweeping down the laurel-walk, trembles through the boughs of the chestnut, then dies away in the distance. Then the voice of the nightingale, sweet and poignant, drives home the premonition of disaster, and, without knowing why, Jane weeps.

A little while later, when all doubt concerning her master's love has been cast aside, and when it would seem that she had

reached the summit of happiness, nature again is troubled. The moon is hidden, shadows creep about them until she cannot see Rochester's face. The chestnut tree writhes and groans, the wind roars in the laurel-walk, and sweeps over them, a livid, vivid spark leaps out of a cloud, there is a crack, a crash, and a close rattling peal. In a rush of rain they hurry into the house. Before she left her bed in the morning little Adela ran in to tell her that the great horse-chestnut at the bottom of the orchard had been struck by lightning, and half of it split away.

The trunks, packed, locked, and corded, were ranged in a row along the wall of her little chamber, in readiness for the honeymoon; Rochester was away. Jane, restless, wandered into the library, but hurried out again, chilled by the empty chair and fireless grate. The wind blew eerily, with a sullen, moaning sound, and rose to a gale as her sense of anxious excitement grew stronger. It seemed, she said, to muffle a mournful undersound, recurring doubtful yet doleful, at every lull. Something had happened, during the night. She had dreamt of a wild, gusty night, and had been awakened from her dream by a woman, tall and large, with thick dark hair hanging down her back, and a discoloured savage face. This apparition first tried on Jane's wedding veil, then tore it in two, and trampled on it.

She sought the orchard, driven to its shelter by the wind, which all day had blown strong and full from the south. Instead of subsiding as night drew on it seemed to augment its rush and deepen its roar: the trees blew steadfastly one

way, never writhing round, and scarcely tossing back their boughs once in an hour, so continuous was the strain bending their branch heads northwards; the clouds drifted from pole to pole, fast following mass on mass. As she looked up at the ruin of the chestnut tree "the moon appeared momentarily in that part of the sky which filled their fissure; her disk was blood-red and half overcast; she seemed to throw on me one bewildered, dreary glance, and buried herself again instantly in the deep drift of cloud. The wind fell for a second, round Thornfield; but far away over wood and water poured a wild melancholy wail."

Lucy Snowe wishes that she could ascend the gale, spread and repose her pinions on its strength, career in its course, and sweep where it swept.

Charlotte Brontë was not afraid of nature in her wild moods:

"One night a thunderstorm broke; a sort of hurricane shook us in our beds: . . . the tempest took hold of me with tyranny: I was roughly roused and obliged to live. I got up and dressed myself, and creeping outside the casement close to my bed, sat on its ledge, with my feet on the roof of a lower adjoining building. It was wet, it was wild, it was pitch-dark. . . . I could not go in: too resistless was the delight of staying with the wild hour, black and full of thunder, pealing out such an ode as language never delivered to man—too terribly glorious the spectacle of clouds, split and pierced by white blinding bolts."

Then there is the well-known sentence: "The moon reigns glorious, glad of the gale, as if she gave herself to his fierce caress with love."



OLD QUARRY ROAD, THORNTON MOOR



Emily Brontë, a girl of sixteen, if Charlotte's statement was correct, pining for her home, sings in a slightly different key :

" For the moors ! For the moors ! where the short grass
Like velvet beneath us should lie !
For the moors ! For the moors ! where the high pass
Rose sunny against the clear sky !

" For the moors ! where the linnet was trilling
Its song on the old granite stone,
Where the lark, the wild skylark, was filling
Every breast with delight like its own."

Then she pictures another mood :

" The sun has set, and the long grass now
Waves dreamily in the evening wind ;
And the wild bird has flown from that old grey stone
In some warm nook a couch to find.

" In all the lonely landscape round
I see no light, and hear no sound,
Except the wind that far away
Comes sighing o'er the heathy sea."

She knew the rollicking, roaring horse-play of the moor, its days of majestic splendour, its moods of quivering joy, its pensive mood, its loneliness which seems to mean the shutting off of the material that a glimpse may be gained of something greater, but if she ever felt the desolation of the moor she never told us. For that we must turn again to her sister.

The wind's prophecy had come true, Jane Eyre's cup of happiness had been taken from her even as it touched her lips. Turning a deaf ear to Rochester's pleadings, she had left everything that meant home, protection and love. With a few pence in her pocket, and, so far as she then knew, not a

friend in the world, she tried to find a little spot where, in exchange for service, she might earn enough to buy the humble necessities for keeping life in her frail body. But her fellow creatures, evidently, neither needed what she had to give, nor were willing to give what she needed. There was all the world to wander in, and only one spot where she was wanted—and from that spot she must flee. The great moors behind and on each side of her were typical of her world—waves of mountains as far as her eye could see, roads that stretched east, west, north and south—white, broad, lonely, and every road the same, equally hostile and forbidding; roads that stretched across the moor, and came to the very verge, where the heather grew deep and wild.

Striking straight into the heath, she held on to a hollow she saw deeply furrowing the brown moorside, and waded knee-deep in its dark growth. Turning with its turnings she found a moss-blackened crag in a hidden angle, and sat down under it. Protected by the crag, and the high banks of moor, a new terror gripped her. Afraid of loneliness, yet more afraid of the possibility of the approach of an animal, or of her kind. A gust of wind sweeping the waste was the rush of a bull, the whistle of a plover suggested the sinister designs of a man. To be lost on a moor, with no home to seek, is to be desolate indeed.

Calmed by the silence, however, as evening declined to nightfall she gathered confidence.

“I touched the heath: it was dry, and yet warm with the heat of the summer day. I looked at the sky; it was

pure, a kindly star twinkled just above the chasm ridge. The dew fell, but with propitious softness; no breeze whispered. Nature seemed to me benign and good; I thought she loved me, outcast as I was; and I, who from man could anticipate only mistrust, rejection, insult, clung to her with filial fondness."

After receiving from man only mistrust, rejection and insult, fatigued and starving she turned back to the moor.

"It remained now only to find a hollow where I could lie down, and feel at least hidden, if not secure: but all the surface of the waste looked level. It showed no variation but of tint: green where rush and moss overgrew the marshes; black where the dry soil bore only heath. . . . I sank down where I stood, and hid my face against the ground. I lay still awhile: the night-wind swept over the hill and over me, and died moaning in the distance: the rain fell fast, wetting me afresh to the skin. Could I but have stiffened to the still frost—the friendly numbness of death—it might have pelted on: I should not have felt it; but my living flesh shuddered to its influence."

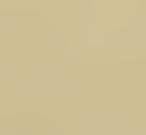
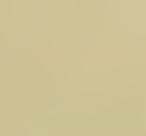
This description of the moors might have been written of the moors near Fly Flat. From Thornton Moor the path to the south leads directly to Ogden Moor, past Ogden Kirk—a rock reminiscent of the Druids—and over the little bridge at the bottom to Withens, at Cold Edge. By turning abruptly after leaving Withens Inn we come to Fly Flats road, and here, to the average traveller, at any rate, is the loneliness that means desolation. On every hand is a wide stretch of flattish moor, heaps of soil and tufts of heather, with scarcely a tree to be seen. To complete the picture, we ought to go when

the sky is an unbroken sheet of grey, with a drizzle, untouched by even a breeze, making pools on the already sodden earth. With hunched shoulders and drooping heads we walk along miles and miles of the dreariest thing on earth—a corporation road on a moor. There are places where the peewits laugh, but here they sob. The deserted houses and the ruin in front of the grey reservoir fit into the landscape. Occasionally a face appears at a curtainless window, but it shows no fear, suspicion, or curiosity; the few human beings left, like the hamlet, are beaten; the grim moor has conquered them. It is quiet enough now, but there is something terrifying in its sombre strength.

Once on a time Fly Flat was a cheerful, busy place: the ring of chisels, the shouts of men, and the rattle, creak and roll of carts broke the silence of the moor, for over three hundred men were employed at the quarries. Of the fifteen quarries then being worked there is now scarcely anything to be seen, the place is as still as the moor itself.

Mr. Whitely Turner tells of a snowstorm here. One afternoon the flakes began to fall thick and fast, driven by a piercing east wind. A woman, living a mile and a half away, had called to see her friends at Fly, and it was more than a week before she could go back home. The snow blocked doors and windows. Fortunately the family had plenty of provisions in the house, and they helped to pass the time by making a cave in the snow, so large that they could furnish it like a room.

It was in a storm of this kind that Benjamin Foster, of Denholme, coming towards Fly from Cockhill moor, dropped





THE MAN ON THE MOOR

in exhaustion, and found a snowy grave. He had been collecting warps from the cottages on the moor, and the afternoon darkened suddenly, with a snow-laden sky. It is supposed that he took a wrong turning, and his horse and cart were precipitated into a deep morass, from which large pieces of turf had been cut. He left them, and went towards Fly in search of help, lost his way, and fell into one of the boggy places on the moor, where he "stiffened to the still frost, the friendly numbness of death," and the merciless snow came down and covered him. Some writers say that he was found next morning, dead, with his dog in an exhausted state lying across his chest, others say that the dog went home to fetch help, which arrived too late. A stone marks the spot where the man was found.

A little way nearer Oxenhope we found the lonely man. A discharged soldier, almost as friendless and poor as Jane Eyre, he came to see what the moor could do for him. He has his cottage, his hens, and his dog. At times, he told us, the fight seems rather hopeless, as things are—but he was not grumbling. There was a wistful desire for a little capital to allow him to speculate in a little more poultry, and perhaps earn enough to give the luxuries and graces of life—an occasional newspaper and pipe, and a half day's jaunt now and then to the haunts of his kind. "But these days one must be grateful for food and shelter—and independence."

The loneliness, but not the desolation, of the moor was in his face, and we carried away with us a little of its haunting sadness. He could have given us the information we asked

for in a few words, but he walked with us a good part of the way; we had ample evidence that his courtesy is typical, not only of the Yorkshireman, but of the moor dweller.

Much has been said about the rudeness of the Yorkshire folk. One man makes the sweeping statement that they have no superior to command, no civilities to practise; a sour and sturdy humour is the consequence, so that a stranger is shocked by a tone of defiance in every voice, and an air of fierceness in every countenance.

"Even now," writes Mrs. Gaskell, "a stranger can hardly ask a question without receiving some crusty reply, if indeed he receive any at all. Sometimes the sour rudeness amounts to positive insult." She then gives a "slight" illustration of the roughness that pervades all classes in these out-of-the-way villages by telling of an incident that happened at Addingham, when she and her husband were passing through. A boy was bleeding to death, on the road, and when the old, asthmatic doctor was sent for, and told that the boy would die if help were not forthcoming, he said: "Damn him: what do I care!" And among the most unmoved of the onlookers was the brother of the boy, who stood coolly smoking his bit of black pipe, and uttered not a word of sympathy or sorrow.

Is Lancashire so far from Yorkshire that Mrs. Gaskell could not understand why the "stoical relation" did not utter a word of sympathy or sorrow? An Englishman prides himself on being able to hide his feelings, a Yorkshireman cannot show them if he would; the deeper his feelings the more "wooden" he becomes. So far as the doctor was con-

cerned, the fact that he lived in a Yorkshire village did not make him a Yorkshireman. When we are out to receive impressions it is a temptation to build from them, and, at times, we may make something which is far from the truth.

A woman lived in this district whose brother, when drunk, fell down a quarry and broke his neck. He was carried home, and the crowd at the door watched to see how this woman, noted for her sharpness of tongue, would be affected by the tragedy. She was baking, and when she saw her brother brought in she scandalized everybody by saying, with apparent unconcern: "Throw him on to t' langsettle; I can't let my cakes burn for him."

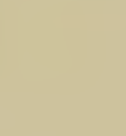
This "proof" of the callousness of the Yorkshire folk loses a little of its value when more is known about the woman. She lived in a neighbourhood where most of the men worked in quarries, and were therefore largely dependent upon the weather even for bread. She often kept families in food practically all winter, and let them pay back, without interest, when they could—many of them never did. Though at one time a well-to-do woman she died in comparative poverty.

At Near New Fly there was once a pack-horse road, which the reservoir has obliterated: the pack-horse roads are well defined on these moors. Old people say it was a common sight, when they were children, to see twenty or thirty gallo-ways, with tinkling bells and gaily-coloured worsted ribbons, file down the moor. Long strings of horses would pass over hill and dale, along the narrow bridle-paths, the first horse carrying a bell.

When we were children they had had their day, but we sang about them without knowing the meaning of the song :

“ Bell horses ! Bell horses !
What time of day ?
One o'clock, two o'clock,
Three and away.”

OXENHOPE





THE ROAD TO DENHOIME, LEEMING

CHAPTER VII

O X E N H O P E

THE view from Sawood, of hills that jump and dip, and jump again, should be seen on a day of great winds and brilliant sunshine, when the ripe golden meadows are romping, and "the mountains and the hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the fields clap their hands." On such a day even Nab Hill loses its gloom, and joins in the great shout, and loses none of its dignity by so doing.

Oxenhope village, though it may be "a sheltered spot for oxen, or ousen (water) between two hills," is itself not built in the hollows only, but on the smaller hills that seem to be in the very act of leaping. The houses are matter-of-fact enough, but the village looks as though it has been planted there by some giant in a freakish humour. The mill chimneys at Leaming and Oxenhope sprout up from the ground, away from the mill, and grow to a tremendous height.

Its people have as keen a sense of humour as their neighbours—but not in regard to the building of their village: home building is one of life's serious affairs.

For a long time they were even more shut off from the world than Haworth, but they were well able to look after themselves, and are still. Some of them, though they will not admit that they have had a better knack of making money

than the folk of the neighbouring towns, admit that they have had a better knack of keeping what they made. The inscription over the door of one of their business houses is interesting :

“ W.M.R.

The Fisher's Lodge 1808,
Repeat no grievances, but
Study to be quiet, and
Mind your own business.”

It is thought by some of the Oxenhope natives that Nab Hill, 1440 feet, the great hill overlooking the valley, is the highest in Yorkshire.

Mr. Whiteley Turner tells what he claims to be a true story about Nab Water farm. Two little girls, from Cold Edge, were passing the farm, and two women were standing outside. One woman asked who the children were, and the other said : “ Wha, doesn't ta know? It's Sarah an' Martha o' Mary's o' John's o' George's o' John's o' Will's o' Tim's at Nat Scar Top.”

Another true story is told, which gives an idea of the dialect. Two Oxenhope women quarrelled, and one of them sued the other at court. The husband of the former, appearing as witness, said : “ 'Er thrutched stoanes at moh wife, an' if 'er 'ad cobbed 'er as 'er cobbed 'er, 'er 'lld 'a' killed 'er, or 'er 'er.” (She threw stones at my wife, and if she had stoned her as she stoned her, she would have killed her, or she her.)

Oxenhope, noted for its music, has had its great man—Thomas Parker. Mrs. Gaskell was probably speaking of him when she said : “ One man still survives, who, for fifty years, has had one of the finest tenor voices I have ever heard, and





OXENHOPE CHURCH

with it a refined and cultivated taste. To him and others many inducements have been offered to migrate; but the loom, the association, the mountain air have had charms enow to secure their continuance at home."

Critics who came from the south to hear him said that they would have brought as fine a tenor voice to London as ever sang there if they could have snared him thither in his youth, but Tom preferred to stay at home. When he was seventy-nine he sang in the "Messiah," at St. George's Hall, Bradford, and walked all the way there, a distance of eleven miles. Because of his age he was allowed to sing one solo, only—"Thou Shalt Break Them"—but the audience, not so considerate, made him sing it three times.

The Brontë interest at Oxenhope is centred in the church, for it was founded by Rev. Joseph Brett Grant—the "Donne" of *Shirley*. It is said he begged practically the whole of the £1,300 it cost to build, and the novelist intimates that he wore his shoes to the uppers in tramping the country to that end.

If the artist paints him in true colours in *Shirley* one can scarcely call him a lovable character.

"Mr. Malone favoured Mr. Donne with hints about his extreme meagreness, allusions to his turned-up nose, . . . and criticisms on a choice set of cockney phrases, and modes of pronunciation. Mr. Donne met these attacks with a stilted self-complacency, and half-sullen phlegm, the sole props of his otherwise rickety dignity."

We see him at the rectory, sitting over his half-empty cup after everybody else has finished, sitting on and on,

simply for the sake of being noticed, in spite of hints from poor Caroline, and the fact that the rector, in a fit of impatience, gives thanks for the meal, and thus gives the sign for all to leave the table. He does not move until the bell has been rung for the tea-things to be removed, and his very cup is taken from him.

We see him at Miss Ainley's eating a double quantity of cake, and putting a third piece in his pocket; at Fieldhead, fleeing up the oak staircase, with Malone at his heels, and Tartar after him, then holding the bedroom door against his fellow curate, for fear that by giving sanctuary he will also let in the dog. "When at last he left his tower of refuge he was neither ashamed nor confused."

"Mr. Donne was not grateful—he never was grateful for kindness and attention. After receiving Shirley's peace offering in the shape of a bouquet of flowers his 'Thank you' was rich to hear: it was the most fatuous, arrogant of sounds, implying that he considered the offering as an homage to his merits, and an attempt on the part of the heiress to ingratiate herself into his priceless affections."

Then there was the impossible scene in the garden, when his audacity and blind conceit wrought Shirley's temper to such a pitch that she literally turned him out.

"'How dare the pompous priest abuse his flock? How dare the lisping Cockney revile Yorkshire?' was her sole observation as she returned to the table."

Yet the novelist gives him a good word at the end. He turned out admirably, she tells us, married a quiet, lady-like

woman, and became an exemplary domestic character and a truly active parish priest.

“ His little school, his little church, his little parsonage, all owed their erection to him; and they did him credit: if uniformity and taste in architecture had been the same thing as consistency and earnestness in religion, what a shepherd of a Christian flock Mr. Donne would have made! There was one art in the mastery of which nothing mortal ever surpassed Mr. Donne—it was the art of begging . . . he got five pounds from the close-fisted old lady Queen Charlotte, and two guineas from the royal profligate her eldest son, . . . that you had given a hundred pounds yesterday was, to him, no reason why you should not give two hundred to-day . . . people gave to get rid of him.”

She was probably thinking of Chaucer's friar :

“ He was the best beggar in all his house,
For though the widowe had but a shoe
Yet wolde have a farthing ere he went.”

But was there not a little magnanimity mingled with the conceit? The real Mr. Donne, after reading all this, and knowing it to be an acknowledged portrait of himself, evidently forgave. In a letter to Ellen Nussey the novelist says : “ Mr. Donne was at first a little disturbed; for a week or two he was in disquietude, but he is now soothed down; only yesterday I had the pleasure of making him a cup of tea, and seeing him sip it with revived complacency. It is a curious fact that, since he read *Shirley*, he has come to the house oftener than ever, and been remarkably meek and assiduous to please.”

And he built a beautiful church, either through a natural

artistic sense or the happy knack of hitting on the right thing, which sometimes serves the same purpose. It is a church built upon a hill, where it can be seen for miles around, and where, in turn, it commands an extensive view. Anglo-Norman in style, with a great square tower, it seems to have grown out of its surroundings rather than to have been built there, and though built in 1849 it looks as if it had been there for all time, and will be there until the earth itself crumbles—or until the country round has been made other than it is. It is like a symbol of something as strong as the hills, as simple as man, as grand as the moors around and the heavens above. Its bell rings out to the solitary man in the wilds, and, with the aid of instinct and memory, awakens an echo that leaves a longing, sweet and poignant, for he knows not what.

The indefatigable “Donne” started his labours in a “wool-combing shop,” filled it to the door, then went a-begging for funds for a Day and Sunday School. After getting these he begged a church—then a goodly house to live in.

The Worth Valley Railway, which has its terminus at Oxenhope, and the difficulties the contractors had in its construction, gave plenty of scope for the wit of the neighbourhood. In some parts the soil was of a very loose nature, somewhat resembling quicksands, and made it difficult to get a foundation. At one time the foundations of the new Wesleyan Chapel at Haworth gave way, and the whole chapel began to tumble down; this cost the company several thousand pounds. One of the difficulties, that found its way into song,



UPPER TOWN, OXENHOPE



was caused by a brindled cow, which, it is said, strayed on the line, and ate up the plans of the railway, which an engineer had left on the bank. It is also said that the station at Damems—a little lower down the line than Haworth—was once put on a waggon and taken away, in mistake for a hen-house, but whether this delayed operations or not history does not tell.

Tradition says that when the first train coughed its way into Oxenhope station, in April, 1873, an old woman said that a “peggy-tub o’ draff an’ meyl” (water and meal) might ease its sufferings. Another woman, after looking at the single line for some time in silence, turned away with a headshake, and said that nobody would catch *her* getting on that train, taking her nobody knew where, when she’d have the whole way to walk back!

The Oxenhope and Haworth folk like to poke sly fun at each other. We were told a tale at Oxenhope about Haworth which, it was said, we should not hear at the little town over the hill. A Haworth woman one Sunday morning prepared some “sheep heead broth,” put it on the hob to cook, then left it in charge of a small son, and went to church. But she had evidently put it too near the fire, and it began to boil violently. The boy ran off to church, opened the door, and began to make signs for his mother to come home. The mother, in turn, made emphatic signs for her son to go away, so the boy, who evidently possessed a lively imagination, said in a loud whisper:

“Stop winkin’ your winkin’s an’ noddin’ your noddin’s,

for t' sheep heead is tuppin' (tossing) t' dumplin's reight on to t' hearthstun'."

Lower Town, at Oxenhope, is a district of swaying trees and meadows, and little mills, with elevated, grassy-banked dams, but when we have climbed to the high road it at once becomes bare again, and does not change until Haworth is reached.

In February, 1820, a line of carts, seven of them containing furniture, the eighth, a light covered waggon, with a precious load of women and children, climbed the steep hill at Thornton, ambled along the comparative flat of Black Dyke Lane, and on to Cullingworth—skirting on the right Hallas Bridge, with its slow-moving witch. Perhaps even then Cullingworth and Hewenden, with their wealth of fairy and ghost lore, would have interested the Brontë children, in a later day they probably did. Mr. Harry Speight suggests that the strong belief in fairies and dwarfs round about Bingley, Wilsden and neighbourhood was based on an inherited tradition that a very small race of beings once dwelt there, in fact the actual aborigines of the Ice Age.

The people of this district are descendants of the Celts, ". . . who had a profound reverence for the sublime and mysterious in the natural world. The vastness and mystery of the all-beneficent sun, the wandering moon, the glitter of the far-off stars moved him to believe that his own little world around him was also full of a mysterious existence: thus the bare hills and the solitudes of the deep woods he delighted to people with all kinds of strange imaginings,



CULLINGWORTH VIADUCT



which his children's children imbibed in the spirit of actual experience."

From Cullingworth the little procession of vehicles crossed the moor, by the elevated road, past Flappit Springs, and down the hill to Haworth. The spirit of the country, having seen the quality of this nurseryful of children at Thornton parsonage, brought them on to its more intimate dwelling place :—in more respects than one what is begun at Thornton reaches its climax at Haworth.

HAWORTH





MAIN STREET, HAWORTH



CHAPTER VIII

HAWORTH

MR. HORSFALL TURNER tells of a Haworth native who, at a time of trade depression, set out to seek work elsewhere. At the top of Haworth Brow he turned to give a farewell look at the old village. His heart beat and throbbed, and observing the grey smoke just beginning to rise from the cottages he cried out :

“Haworth!—dear Haworth!—I will never forsake thee, with thy pure rock water and good milk at three ha’pence a quart !”

The humour was probably intentional—it was his simple way of at once expressing and hiding as strong and true an emotion as Emily, Charlotte and Anne Brontë felt, and expressed, in exile.

It is only the stranger who finds Haworth itself dreary and uninteresting, and he has evidently been so absorbed in the hunt for the elusive ghosts of the Brontës that he has missed whatever it was in their country which gave them inspiration. Pilgrims began to pour into Haworth in 1850, in 1895 ten thousand worshipped at the Brontë shrine. Two-thirds of these chose a day with a cloudless sky—for in such an out-of-the-way place one must not be caught in the rain. Under a broiling sun they toiled up the steep street, walked, or stood,

with aching backs for an hour, or so, in the museum and the church, then set out over a baking moor to the waterfall. Half of them dropped by the way, the rest struggled valiantly on. After another weary while the remaining few gazed in rapture at a thin trickle of water, sat for a moment in the "Brontë Chair," and tried to forget bodily discomfort in imagining what Charlotte Brontë felt like when thinking out her plots, then returned to their half-rested friends and told enthusiastic tales—denying the inward growing conviction that, whether the genius of the three Haworth sisters has been over-rated or not, their district certainly has.

The greater part of the remaining third of the pilgrims read up, beforehand, all that they could get hold of about the grey tragedy, then went to Haworth seeking what they expected to find—and, as is usually the case in such circumstances, found it.

The artist, with his literary interest perhaps not so keen, sees interest and beauty in the climbing houses, clinging to the moor, or hugging each other in their determination to keep from falling back, the higgledy-piggledy chimneys, jauntily sitting astride the slanting roofs, and the exquisite colouring of greys, browns, and greens. Of the writers, however, it is the Yorkshire-born only who have shown no surprise that any good thing can come out of Haworth: and they are accused of the blindness of prejudice, or of keeping up a fiction for loyalty's sake.

Even now, with factory smoke and the din of traffic to obscure and deafen the senses, Haworth is surely romantic.

The grim joke of that dramatic abrupt dip into the valley, only to toil painfully up again on the other side : the town, slowly growing on a hill that is still crowned with a moor of the most forbidding type, frowning down on the unheeding, self-interested crowd below, a stern moor, its crumbling sides taking away none of its air of stability.

New Haworth is a strange mixture of trees, water, huge stones, warehouses, mills and smoke, surrounded with great hills, and is interesting in that it shows the particular form in which the old spirit of energy has taken shape. This form of expression, perhaps, does not appeal to the outsider. In the old days the poorest managed to get a little of their individuality into their dwellings, the people of means built homes as solid as themselves, and dated them, as though, with their families, they meant them to outlast time itself. The new towns and villages will lose more and more of interest until a new, and more interesting, generation comes along, that has the wit to do what the Oxenhope "Donne" did in building his church, take and use the spirit of the country, which is already there, instead of robbing the place of its individuality by running up buildings for a passing utility only.

If indeed that little family at the parsonage had nothing but tears and heartbreak, without a smile or a moment's joy, the village was not wholly to blame. They were physically frail, and they had an absorbed, and studious, though unjustly abused father, who, not without reason, found it difficult to understand this strange brood around him. They were abnormally sensitive, things which to a healthy girl would

have meant temporary annoyance were to them positive torture—the price often paid for nerves so ready to vibrate. They were poor; passionately fond of home they had to spend a great part of their time in exile, they taught unruly children and sewed endless frills and seams when the genius within them was clamouring for expression. The spirit of their country certainly demanded much, but, in the case of Emily and Charlotte, at any rate, it paid generously for all it took.

When Emily yearns for “the spot mid barren hills” it is not only of firelight and loved faces she dreams, but of

“ The mute bird sitting on the stone,
The dank moss dripping from the wall,
The thorn trees gaunt, the walks o’ergrown,
I love them—how I love them all !

“ A little and a lone green lane,
That opened on a common wide;
A distant, dreamy dim blue chain
Of mountains circling every side.

“ A heaven so clear, an earth so calm,
So sweet, so soft, so hushed an air,
And, deepening still the dream-like charm,
Wild moor sheep feeding everywhere.

“ That was the scene, I knew it well;
I knew the turfy pathway’s sweep,
That, winding o’er each billowy swell,
Marked out the tracks of wandering sheep.”

And, again, there is the poem :

“ The old church tower and garden wall
Are black with autumn rain,
And dreary winds forboding call
The darkness down again.

"I watched how evening took the place
Of glad and glorious day;
I watched a deeper gloom efface
The evening's lingering ray;
And as I gazed on the cheerless sky,
Sad thoughts rose in my mind."

If this had been a whine about a wet day she would not have made us feel the keen pleasure of watching the slow, melancholy approach of evening, making still darker the rain-blackened walls.

Charlotte and Emily, of a stronger type than Anne, adapted themselves to whatever was alien in their environment, and by so doing found self-fulfilment and happiness: but there must have been, also, something in them which responded to its spirit. They not only stayed at Haworth, but Emily, at least, was never happy when away from it.

There came a time when Charlotte wrote page after page in her letters about the dreariness of the place, but if, in the same domestic circumstances, she had been living in the most beautiful spot on earth she would have found it dreary. She was not so self-sufficient as Emily, nor as satisfied with her immediate home circle and her moors: she was gregarious, and capable of affection as passionate, perhaps, as has ever been known in a woman with a mind so balanced. Three of her dearest had been cut away with one tragic sweep.

"I got here a little before eight o'clock. All was clean and bright, waiting for me. Papa and the servants were well, and all received me with an affection that should have consoled. The dogs seemed in strange ecstasy. I am certain that they regarded me as the harbinger of the others.

. . . I felt that the house was all silent, the rooms were all empty. I remembered where the three were laid—in what narrow, dark dwellings—never more to reappear on earth. . . . I cannot help thinking of their last days, remembering their sufferings, and what they said and did, and how they looked in mortal affliction. . . . To sit in a lonely room, the clock ticking loud through the house——”

Her father, the only one left, she scarcely saw, for he spent the greater part of his time in the study; her women friends were separated from her by the difficulties of travel and home duties. There was, also, not only distance but the strange silence between her and her friend at Brussels, and, without taking the vulgarized view of her affection for him, we cannot but admit that, in the highest sense of the term, it was passionate. She said that her only desire for fame was that it might bring her into personal touch with the people she admired, the people with minds, and interests, similar to her own. She had tasted just enough of this to make her hunger more keen. In this moorland village, in the house surrounded with graves, with its empty rooms and chairs for ever reminding her of the joys she had known and lost, her daily interest the only link she had left with the world outside—the visit of the postman—what wonder that she spoke of the dreariness of Haworth!

With her quick human interest the wonder is that, though she used the characteristics of the district and its people, she went farther afield for her models. Here, at hand, were folk absolutely unspoiled, made by the country itself, after its own pattern.



THE BRONTÉ WATERFALL



Before the Brontë days John Newton tells us, quaintly :

“Haworth is one of those obscure places which, like the fishing towns in Galilee, favoured with our Lord’s presence, owe all their celebrity to the gospel. The name of Haworth would scarcely be known at a distance were it not connected with the name of Grimshaw.”

Farther back still, when printing was an undiscovered art, and writing known only to the few, probably the spirit of the place entered into some other man or woman, and made of them as strong a character as a Grimshaw or a Brontë.

A fitting entrance to old Haworth was the Toll Bar, at “Brigus Loin Top”—the second was in West Lane, the third at Stanbury. When the toll bars were pulled down the whole village, which never lost an opportunity of rejoicing *en masse*, rose up in celebration. The village “singers” climbed into a waggon, and paraded the streets and roads, singing :

“Wait for the waggon, and we’ll all have a ride.”

One after another not only waited for the waggon, but climbed into it, until it brimmed over, and dropped part of its load, only to receive more. A similar occurrence happened at the end of the Crimean War. Over the moor from Denholme there came a waggon, loaded with a tremendous block of coal, weighing, it is said, about two tons, and preceded by the Denholme Brass Band—known for some time afterwards as “T’ Pit-Shaft Band.” The village went out

to meet it, then followed, shouting and singing, up the main street, and on to West Lane, where the coal was broken to pieces, and distributed. Thus was peace celebrated in Haworth.

Mrs. Gaskell tells how the people celebrated their weddings.

“When the parties were above the rank of labourers a levy was made on the horses of the neighbourhood, and a merry cavalcade of mounted men and women traversed the way to Bradford church. The inn and church appeared to be in natural connection, and as the labours of the Temperance Society had then to begin, the interests of sobriety were not always consulted. On remounting their steeds they commenced with a race, and not infrequently an inebriate or unskilful horseman or woman was put *hors de combat*. A race also was frequent at the end of these wedding expeditions, from the bridge to the toll-bar at Haworth. The race-course you will know to be anything but level !”

The well in Sun Street is also a relic of the jolly old days, when a limit was put to the length of a woman's tongue—and a man's, also. The Ducking Stool was not only for brawling women, but for men and women scolds, backsliders, disturbers of the peace, and dishonest bakers. The custom is said to be of Saxon origin, and was called by them “Scalping Stool,” or Scold's Stool.

The culprit was tied in a chair, which was securely fastened to the end of a long pole, and as this pole was worked on a pivot at the centre the victim could be plunged or ducked into the water as often as was thought necessary. It was

evident from the following verses that the first ducking did not always stop the noise.

" Down in the deep the stool descends,
But here, at first, we miss our ends;
She mounts again, and rages more
Than ever vixen did before.

" If so, my friend, pray let her take
A second turn into the lake;
And rather than your patience loose
Thrice and again repeat the dose.
No brawling wives, no furious wenches,
No fire so hot but water quenches."

The Scold's Bridle, an iron instrument which fastened with a padlock behind the head, and prevented the wearer from speaking, would be more effective at the time, but one wonders what happened when the bridle was taken off.

Not far from Brigus Loin lived Dan o' Nathan's, a man who was always willing to give a cup of tea to anybody who would take enough to eat for him and themselves as well. One night two friends called, and gladdened his heart by the sight of a thick juicy steak, which they had brought for supper. Dan joyfully got out the frying-pan, hung it on the hook in the chimney, then put in the steak, taking turns with the two men in the frying.

It was one of the large chimneys so dear to the heart of the practical joker, and up above, on the housetop, was another "friend," who put down a rope, with another hook on the end. One of the visitors, down below, while taking his turn in the cooking, changed the frying-pan to the second hook, and when poor Dan was giving the savoury steak a

last turn over it vanished, with the frying-pan, up the chimney.

As soon as we enter the Main Street, and come in sight of the "Black Bull," Haworth ceases to be a town. The air of busyness has gone at the first sight of the shops and the people who come leisurely to the doors to look at the stranger with aloof, but not unkindly, curiosity. We forget the new houses and the bustle, and are back again in old Haworth.

It was down this street that the dancing bear came somewhere about 1874. The population of that remote place, said the narrator, unaccustomed to such sights, were much astonished, and the oldest inhabitant, after long contemplation, remarked :

"I don't know what that is, but I think it's what they call a Papist."

Possibly the man who told that tale was one of the many who do not understand the queer twistings of Yorkshire humour. Probably the oldest inhabitant did say that, and said it without a twinkle in his eye. One of the oldest inhabitants now living at Haworth tells, also without a twinkle, that he never spoke to his wife until the day he married her, and this in spite of the fact that they were both born in the same hour of the same day of the same year, neither of them was deaf nor dumb, and the courtship was carried on pretty much as other courtships in those far-back days. He does not even smile if it be necessary to explain that, in Haworth, a woman becomes a wife the day she is married.

He tells a story of his boyhood, when, as a lad of ten, he "lathered" for his father, who was the village barber. One day, he says, Patrick Brontë was in the chair, his head thrown back, his face almost unrecognizable because of the white froth, when in came a Haworth native, who swore when he saw that he could not take his turn at once.

When Mr. "Brunty's" tongue was at last unloosened he mildly reproved the blasphemer, and suggested that there was a Book he might read with profit.

The man, undaunted, though slightly ashamed, apologized, and said that his language would have been less strong had he known who was in the room, but added that there was a book which made more impression on him and his wife than the Bible did.

"What is that?" asked Mr. Brontë, interested and curious.

"The book we take to the grocer's, when we have no brass to pay t' grocer with," was the reply.

Then, according to the narrator, the minister gave the man a two-shilling piece.

This must be taken along with the well-known story about the threatened terrible scandal at Thornton, when, according to the report of a very shocked lady, the curate had been seen at his bedroom window, *shaving* one Sunday morning. The lady, however, carried the story to the sinner before making it public, and, so it is said, Mr. Brontë told her that, at that time, he did not need to shave at all.

As Mr. Brontë changed his name from "Brunty" before coming to England it was interesting to note that this old Haworth native, who had known Mr. Brontë well, always spoke of him as "Brunty." He described Mr. Nicholls as "tall and handsome, and as black as a sloe."

THE CHURCHYARD AND PARSONAGE





MAIN STREET, HAWORTH

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCHYARD AND PARSONAGE

TO those who know the character of the Haworth people it is no matter for surprise that that familiar feature of the village, the churchyard, instead of rousing awe, should be the subject for grim jest.

They tell a tale about an undertaker who spent his time at the "Black Bull" when he ought to have been making a coffin. A woman of the village, who had promised to help in the last service to the dead, found when she arrived at the house that the family was in distress because the coffin could not be ready in time for the funeral. As she happened to be a woman of resource she immediately left the house, took the shortest cut to the "Black Bull," fetched out the undertaker, and took him home, then stood over him until the coffin was finished. This was some time in the small hours of the morning. As he was not in a fit state to carry the coffin, or even to help, and there was nobody else about, she put it on her back, and went off with it herself.

It was a moonlight night, and at first all went well. But her way lay through the churchyard, and when she reached the stile at the other end the shape, as well as the size, of her burden prevented her from getting through.

As it happened a very belated traveller from Stanbury was passing, and stood for a moment, transfixed, at this strange sight, in such a spot. Then a voice said :

“ Here, I say, mister ! I’ve managed so far, but I can’t get over this last bit ; come an’ give us a hand wi’ this coffin.”

Needless to say she was left to get out of her difficulty as best she could—and a strange rumour ran through Haworth in the morning.

A similar story is told about a Haworth joiner who, in his early manhood, went to live at Hebden Bridge, and, as often happened, made his own coffin in readiness. Living to a good old age, however, he retired from business, and decided to spend his last years in his native place, so back he came, bringing his coffin with him, on his back. Half-way across Cock Hill Moor it began to rain heavily, so he sat down on the road side, and put the coffin in front of him, for shelter. A man coming along began to show signs of curiosity and fear, so the joiner showed his face at the side of the coffin, in a friendly manner, and said :

“ I think it’ll ’bate in a bit ! ”

It is said that the man never stopped running until he reached Oxenhope.

Not long ago one of the old natives, attending the funeral of his sister, coughed rather painfully when in the churchyard, and the vicar said, sympathetically :

“ You’ll have to get rid of that cough, George ! ”

“ Aye,” agreed George, “ there’s lots here ’ud be fain on it ” (glad of it).

And, stranger still, the dead jest with the living. We can hear the very tones of that sepulchral voice from below, as we read on the tombstone :

“ Time was I stood as thou dost now
And viewed the dead as thou dost me :
Ere long thou’lt stand as low as I
And others stand and look o’er thee.”

The sun creeps behind the clouds, the birds hide behind the shuddering leaves as we hurry from the gruesome spot—then the chuckle from the grave grows louder when we are pulled up by the sun-dial, to hear its warning :

“ Remember thy latter end ! ”

But one family managed to laugh at death for a long time. On one gravestone we read of six people, their ages when they passed on were, respectively, 88, 86, 95, 85, 70, and 50—an aggregate of 474 years for the six.

The humour becomes cynical here :

“ This world’s a city, full of crooked streets,
Death is the market-place, where all men meet :
If life was merchandise that men could buy,
The rich would live, the poor must surely die.”

A warmer note is struck in the following :

“ Beneath this stone doth lie
As much virtue as could die,
When on earth did vigour give
To as much beauty as could live.”

And, again, we are told that a man “ departed this life without a blot on his character.”

In the old yard, now inaccessible to the public, there is a roughly hewn stone, bearing the simple inscription :

“ J. S. 1796.”

It is believed to be the grave of a man who was hanged at York for sheep stealing, and his body brought home in a cart.

Near this is a stone which suggests material for a three-volume novel :

Here lie the
Bodies of the 5
Wives of William
Sunderland. Also
William Sunderland

1799

Here are buried the two faithful servants of the Brontës, Tabitha and Martha. Tabitha went to the parsonage when Charlotte Brontë was about nine years old, and was there thirty years. She died a few months before the last of the Brontë sisters. Mrs. Gaskell, who knew her, speaks of her as being typically Yorkshire, in speech, appearance, and character : she had strong practical sense and shrewdness, her words were far from flattering, but she would spare no deeds in the cause of those whom she kindly regarded. She ruled the children sharply, yet never grudged extra trouble to provide them with small treats.

Yorkshire women, in the industrial districts, do not as a rule take kindly to domestic service, but when they happen to find a home where they can be treated as a friend, if a

humble one, they will not only give willing, but reverent service. Tabitha was treated as a friend. Charlotte Brontë, writing to Ellen Nussey, tells of an accident, when Tabitha broke her leg. She was nearly seventy at the time, and, apart from the accident, past the age for active service, and Miss Branwell suggested that she should be taken to live with her sister, in the village. Her savings were enough to keep her in comfort, and the parsonage would supply whatever delicacies were needed.

At first Mr. Brontë refused to listen, but Miss Branwell urged economical motives, and said it was his duty to his family.

When he gave way the girls were told what was on foot. There were symptoms of a quiet but sturdy rebellion—they made one unanimous and stiff remonstrance. Tabby had tended them in their childhood; they, and none other, should tend her in her infirmity and age. They “struck” eating till the resolution was rescinded.

In later years she was like an old faithful dog whose affection outlasts his capacity for service. Jealous of the new servant, Martha, when she could do little else she watched for the postman, and would let nobody else take the precious letters from him. They found her difficult to manage, at times, for she expected to be told of the family concerns, and she had grown so deaf that what was repeated to her became known to whoever might be in or about the house. When there was anything which they did not wish to make public, therefore, Miss Brontë would take Tabitha for a walk on the moors, where, when both were seated on

a tuft of heather, in some high lonely place, she could acquaint the old woman, at leisure, with all that she wanted to hear.

Martha, the younger servant, was the daughter of John Brown, sexton, grave-digger, Worshipful Master of the Masonic Lodge of the Three Graces, and Branwell's friend. Branwell was at once secretary to the Three Graces, which had its convivial meetings at the "Black Bull," and to the Haworth Temperance Society. Branwell and John had affectionate names for each other, Branwell was The Philosopher, John was the Old Knave of Trumps. Branwell wrote a letter to the Sexton, asking at the end that it might be destroyed, but John was so proud of it that he showed it to everybody who cared to read, and his brother learnt it off by heart.

It is believed that Mr. Joseph Hardaker had both John and John's father in mind when he wrote the lines :

" O, sexton, ye are such a soul,
Ye little care for whom ye toll;
If ye can drain the arvill bowl,
With many more.
Ye'll for a moment sigh and growl,
Then all is o'er.

" Before the corpse, in solemn pace,
Full oft I've seen ye pull a face;
As though ye were to truth and grace
Nearly allied.

" But think ye, old case-hardened blade,
Knight of the mattock and the spade,
Some lustier brother of the trade,
Perhaps e'er long
May lig you where you've thousands laid,
Nor think it wrong? "





THE TREES ON HAWORTH MOOR

In spite of his queer character, and queer occupation, the Brontës must have had a certain amount of trust in him, for he had charge of Branwell on a journey to Liverpool, when Branwell was at his worst.

The arvills, or funeral meals, are of ancient standing, but have now almost vanished. In the 17th century we read of "cold possets, stewed prunes, cakes and cheese," in 1673 "nothing but a bit of cake, a draught of wine, a piece of rosemary, and a pair of gloves."

In the villages there are still "funeral teas," and this is almost a necessity so long as it remains the custom for all the relatives, whether living near or far, to follow the coffin to the grave. So far as friends and acquaintances are concerned, even to-day, the time over the teacups and afterwards is chiefly spent by the women in talking over the virtues of the dead, and by the men in telling funny tales. It is often a strange experience, when the meal has been provided at the home of the relatives, to see the family in the kitchen, wincing at the peals of laughter that come from the front room. Probably much of this is hysteria, and much of it custom, but there are people still alive who seem to get some kind of morbid pleasure out of the things that appertain to death.

It is not long since the custom of giving a pair of black gloves to the mourners was stopped, later still each mourner was supplied, on entering the house, with a sip of wine and a "burrin' biscuit," wrapped in white tissue paper, and sealed with black wax. Thoughtful fathers pocketed the

bun to take home to the children, who therefore used to feel a mild anticipatory pleasure in funerals.

Black is still worn at these times, and, as much of this is borrowed for the occasion, a picture is formed which is dangerous to the hysterical: a procession of women in frocks too short and frocks too long, and hats which were ostensibly not made or bought for the wearer.

There may be something fitting, in these mountainous regions, in the people following one of their clan to his last resting-place, in full view of a more or less sympathetic public; but in these supersensitive days there is something appalling to the nearest of kin in this public display of grief.

The funeral service, too, is still in existence, when, the Sunday after the funeral, friends and relatives must attend chapel or church to sing "appropriate" hymns, about death and the blissful state of the departed, and to listen to a sermon which is chiefly composed of his life-history.

Tales are told of boys dressed in sheets hiding behind gravestones, but the endings are too tame. When caught unawares the old people at Haworth acknowledge that there have been real ghost stories—but hasten to add that nobody believed them. One may gather hints about mysterious rattling of oven-tins through the night, in a house at "t' top," where a baker once lived, and about "t' Butterfeld boggard," at "t' bottom," but nothing more will they tell about either the baker or the boggard.

Tabitha, however, said she had known folk who had seen the fairies that frequented the beck on moonlight nights,

when all the wool-spinning was done by hand in the farm-houses round—the factories, she said, had driven the fairies away. And book history does not show the Haworth people to have been quite so hard-headed as they would now appear. Once they believed that a child born on the fourth day of the moon would be a great politician, on the tenth, a traveller, on the twenty-first, a bold robber, and that mugwort acted as a charm and magic spell if carried about the person.

We are also told that “ Grace Serious gravely asserted to her neighbours that last night, as she was walking thoughtfully along the footpath which goes direct through the old graveyard, at Haworth, she saw something like a white Angora cat, with long white fur ! When she moved *it* moved, and when she stood *it* stood. But, thanks to the heavens ! it disappeared instantly as the old church clock in the tower struck twelve. The old haunted hall, not far from the rustic habitation of Grace Serious, has long been unoccupied. Grace declared that she beheld, with her own eyes, the ghost in the old churchyard, and a few days afterwards she heard the well-known voice of the old squire, on the lawn, close by the old haunted hall. Only recently she had heard, not only the voice but the step of the old squire, pacing along the old oak gallery of the now deserted hall ! ”

Grace was indeed gifted with second sight.

The ghost of the old Manor House was the restless spirit of a far-back mistress, who evidently could not leave her beloved Haworth. There is no known reason why she should haunt her old home, unless it be that, like Catherine

Earnshaw, she was not at home in heaven, and the angels, in anger, threw her back to her native heath. She troubled nobody, but walked about so quietly and harmlessly that the people ceased to fear her.

One Jack Kay studied the stars, and thereby learnt many things that were hidden from the ordinary mortal. Though he thought it sinful to claim the power of fortune-telling, rich and poor came from far and near to learn from him what was written about them in the Book of Fate.

A "Haworth Native," writing in the *Yorkshire Observer*, tells a story told by his mother about two brothers who lived at Haworth. "They had a 'fearsome' quarrel, one day, and went on the moor to fight it out. They struggled until the sun went down, and neither could get the upper hand. Then one aimed a blow and killed the other. Stone dead he was. And the living man buried his brother in the boggy ground hard by Harbour Hill. He never told, and nobody guessed what had happened. They thought his brother had gone to America, and in time forgot him. But the murderer did not forget—he was haunted ever after! The murdered man gets up in wild weather, and stands with his face turned towards the churchyard."

Haworth parsonage is practically in the graveyard. Mr. Frank Peel, writing in 1855, tells of his impressions, when seeing it as it was then.

"A low stone house which occupied one corner of the graveyard. A field had evidently been set apart, and the founders of the church had said 'in three-quarters of it we will inter

the dead, and in that other fourth we will bury the living.' A little garden was before it, and you stepped straight off the graveyard into it. You also went down one step, as towards a larger grave. A flagged walk led up to the front door, and it was covered over with a damp green film, and in the interstices grew an almost black moss. The stone of the house was of the same melancholy tint as the flags of the walk: of all the sad, heart-broken dwellings I have passed this was the saddest."

Mrs. Gaskell's picture is rather more cheerful. She speaks of the crowded graveyard—"terribly full of upright tombstones," but she also tells of a narrow flower-border, carefully tended in days of yore, although only hardy plants could be made to grow there, of bushes of elder and lilac, with a square grass-plot and a gravel walk. "Everything about the house tells of the most dainty order, the most exquisite cleanliness. The doorsteps are spotless; the small old-fashioned window-panes glitter like looking-glass. Inside and outside of that house cleanliness goes up into its essence, purity."

Patrick Brontë had much to do with the sanitation of Haworth, and the closing of the old graveyard, but at its best the parsonage, built in such a spot, must have been a sorry place. No wonder that Charlotte wrote:

"I sometimes think, when late at even,
I climb the stair reluctantly,
Some shape that should be well in heaven
Or ill elsewhere, shall pass me by.

"I fear to see the very faces
Familiar thirty years ago,
Even in the old accustomed places,
Which look so cold and gloomy now.

" I've come to close the window hither,
At twilight, when the sun was down,
And fear my very soul would wither
Lest something should be dimly shown.

" Too much the buried form resembling,
Of her who once was mistress here;
Lest doubtful shade, or moonbeam trembling,
Might take her aspect, once so dear."

Yet, in spite of all its disadvantages, Emily loved the old house :

" There is a spot, mid barren hills,
Where winter howls and driving rain;
But, if the dreary tempest chills,
There is a light that warms again.

" The house is old, the trees are bare,
Moonless above bends twilight's dome;
But what on earth is half so dear
So longed for, as the heart of home? "

Another interesting building near the churchyard is the "Black Bull." It stands, in an equally neighbourly fashion, close to the church, reminding us of the old couplet :

" When the Lord builds a house of prayer
The devil builds his temple there."

Here, at any rate, the house of hospitality and the house of prayer have been linked together in many a stirring time. It was here that John Newton's friend saw the windows suddenly open, revealing first a scared face, then a body, then a leg came over the sill. Before the first man had reached the ground another appeared, then a third and a fourth. The stranger hurried forward, thinking the house was on fire—but the explanation came with the sight of a





THE BLACK BULL, HAWORTH

well-built man, with a horse-whip in his hand, his brow sternly knit.

“It’s t’ parson!” said one of the fugitives.

In those days mourners went into the church for consolation before the funeral, and into the “Black Bull” for consolation after it. The inn entertained as its honoured guest the minister’s son, and, as the father went in at the front door, in search of him, let the boy out at a back window, that he might be chatting harmlessly in the rectory kitchen when his father returned. At one time it was the custom, after receiving the sacrament, for the church officer to dine here, with the pastor. But this, eventually, was considered a “corrupt custom,” and instead, “on Christmas Day and Good Friday they go together after divine service, to some alehouse, to take a moderate repast.”

On one occasion, too, the “Black Bull” gave sanctuary to a minister and his friends, and not only provided the means of escape from a dangerous situation, but probably saved life itself.

HAWORTH CHURCH





HAWORTH

CHAPTER X

HAWORTH CHURCH

THE superficial reader closes the last of the many books about Haworth with a sigh of thanksgiving that that benighted village had at least a Grimshaw and the Brontës. We are told that the religion of the natives did not work downwards into their lives. They drank and gambled, spent their Sundays in frivolities, and sinister things happened in their woods. They were "wild, rough, and heathenish," and revenge was handed down from father to son as an hereditary duty. The horse-races were "periodical sources of profligacy and wickedness, attracting profligate people to Haworth, who brought a match to the combustible materials of the place, only too ready to blaze out into wickedness."

Even after the influence of Grimshaw, John Wesley, George Whitfield and the saintly Fletcher we find them turning a minister out of his appointed place, by the means of chimney sweeps and donkeys, and even endangering his life in their excitement and high spirits.

As it is the exceptional things of a period that stand out in the memory, and finally become "history," so the events connected with Haworth church which have been humorous and strongly characteristic of the people have become its

history. But not even Grimshaw, any more than Lot, could have saved a city which had not the power of salvation within itself—and the wickedness does not bear quite so dark a shade when we learn that Grimshaw's standard of righteousness forbade walking in the fields on a Sabbath, between the services. Amongst those who loved riot and horse-play and dogged independence for its own sake there must have been people in the background, quietly and earnestly "pressing forward towards the mark of the high calling." If they had not been there the Bradford man would not have walked twenty-two miles every Sunday to worship at Haworth.

The truth probably was that these people, untouched by the outside world, or by books, were pretty much what their country made them, and the first necessity for their sturdy natures was that they must have something to do. When the Church gave them a man after their own heart, even though he did fetch them from the alehouse with a whip, and sought them in the farthest hut on the hills to plead with them to repent, they followed him in their thousands.

William Grimshaw, a Haworth man by temperament if not by birth, was born at Brindle, near Preston, in 1708. He came to Haworth in 1742, where he lived for twenty years. John Newton, his biographer, tells us : " The bleak and barren face of the adjacent country was no improper emblem of the state of the inhabitants, who in general had little more sense of religion than their cattle, and were wild and uncultivated like the rocks and mountains which surrounded them." But

he tells us that soon, under Grimshaw's ministry, "the barren wilderness rejoiced and blossomed like the rose."

John Newton's book, delightful in its quaintness, warns us at the beginning that he will not confine himself strictly to dates and facts, "but shall occasionally offer such reflections as may occur, with simplicity and freedom; as writing a few letters to an intimate friend, rather than a book."

He tells us of Grimshaw at Cambridge, where he went "professedly with a view of obtaining a due preparation for the important office of a minister of the gospel"; he "loved jovial company, days of high living and boisterous jollity."

"Though at this time," says his biographer, "he was not without serious reflections on death, a future judgment, and the happiness or misery of a future state, which, though transient, frequently returned, bad examples stimulated his natural propensities and passions, and he soon made a proficiency in wickedness." Even after his ordination he "was a gentle casuist, a compliant companion, a man of the world. He satisfied his conscience with the reading of prayers and a sermon. He had so much regard to his character as to guard against profane swearing and excess in drinking when in company with those who disliked these practices, for he was not willing to be deemed quite a profligate. But he was under no restraint with respect to the more decent modes of dissipation."

His growth seems to have come in stages. When he was twenty-six he was "powerfully awakened and alarmed, and

he began to be concerned in good earnest," and appears to have been for the most part in distress of mind until he went to Haworth. He had been there two years when he had his "vision." One Sunday morning he fell down, in the pulpit, in a sort of trance, "from which he came to himself, some time afterwards, and seemed to be in a great rapture. 'I have had a glorious vision from the other world,' he said."

The afternoon service began at two, and he preached so long that it was seven o'clock before he reached home. His labours had begun—that day was born the Grimshaw that was famed throughout the world.

His sermons were usually two hours long, for when preaching he had such a strong feeling that he was speaking to some man whom he might never meet again until the great judgment day, that he must needs leave no word unsaid which might be instrumental in saving his soul. A churchwarden at a strange church hinted to him that the congregation did not like long sermons, and that John Wesley never exceeded an hour. "Mr. Wesley, God bless him!" said Grimshaw, "can do as much in one hour as I can in two," and his sermon was as long as usual.

But the people liked his sermons, in spite of their length, for part of his regular congregation came ten or twelve miles, every Sunday, to hear them.

One reason of his popularity was that he made a point of preaching in language that the most ignorant could understand. His interpretation of a well-known verse from the Psalms was "they who have this God for theirs shall never



HAWORTH MOOR



want a pound of butter for eightpence, or three pints of blue milk for a halfpenny as long as they live."

He held services at half-past five, or six, in the morning, on his "easy week" preached twelve or fourteen times, on his hard week twenty-eight or thirty, very often with his meal of bread and cheese in his pocket, to save time for himself and trouble for his host—tramping over miles of wild moor, in the severest weather, to preach to a few old and decrepit folk in a far-away hamlet. Nor did he lose any opportunity for "testifying" on the way, for "he would rive a traveller from his horse, on a moorland road, to pray with him."

When his clerk became too infirm to go round the parish collecting his salary he collected it himself. He said of his five hundred communicants that, so far as it was possible to know another man, he knew as much about all of them, by visiting and private conversation, as he knew about himself. After giving the congregation already in the church a long Psalm to sing, he went the round of the public houses, whip in hand, to fetch in the reluctant part of his flock, scoured the fields on Sunday afternoons in search of Sabbath breakers who were taking walks, visited the sick, often walking miles in the snow to the house of a sick man, rebuilt and enlarged the church, and built a Wesleyan chapel. He filled his house with guests, and himself slept in the hay-loft—so evidently he did sleep, sometimes—gave away all he had but one pair of shoes and a suit, caught the fever through visiting his stricken flock, and told the doctor that if the Lord would only see fit to raise him again he would strive to be much more

active and diligent. He hoped that his last words on earth would be : “ Here goes an unprofitable servant.”

Truly, as John Newton says, he was a great and wonderful man.

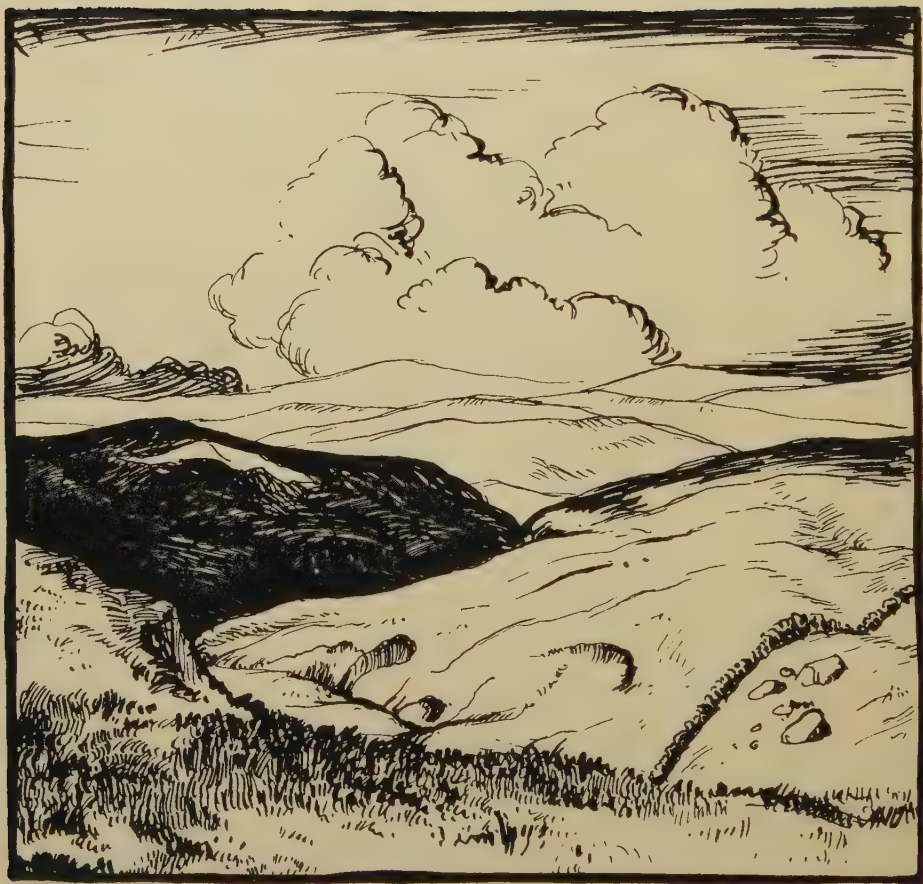
He also stopped the Haworth races. The horse races were held on the moor, just above the village, and were the means of attracting a large number of undesirable people to Haworth. Grimshaw tried all means of persuasion to have the races stopped, but in vain. “ At last he prayed with such earnestness that the rain came down in torrents, and deluged the ground, so that there was no footing for man or beast, even if the multitude had been willing to stand such a flood let down from above.”

The rain continued for the three days of the races, and the people were so impressed that they were never held again.

Behind the Wesleyan chapel, in West Lane, there is a part of the original chapel, built by Grimshaw. A stone bears the inscription :

The 1ft Chapel was
Erected by the Revd
William Grimshaw,
A.B., Minister of
Haworth Church,
A.D. 1758.
TO US
To Live is CHRIST
To Die is Gain.
A.D. 1758.





HAWORTH MOORS

Grimshaw was the means of bringing to Haworth John and Charles Wesley, George Whitfield, John Fletcher, and many other notable preachers of that day. When John Wesley was there services would be held in the crowded church, then other services, one after the other, in the churchyard, to the thousands who could not get inside; at one time there were as many as six thousand hearers.

For some time after Grimshaw's death Haworth seems to have settled down to a period of quiet. Then, in 1819, the Rev. Patrick Brontë was offered the living of Haworth, by the Rev. Mr. Heap, vicar of Bradford. The trustees of the church demurred, therefore Mr. Brontë said he would not come without the consent of the parish. The Rev. Samuel Redhead was then invited, and accepted the curacy.

Mrs. Gaskell suggests that :

“ probably where Haworth Church now stands there was once an ancient ‘ field-kirk,’ or oratory, so called because it was built without enclosure, and open to the adjoining fields or moors. After the Reformation the right of choosing their clergymen, at any of those chapels-of-ease which had formerly been field-kirks, was vested in the freeholders, or trustees, subject to the approval of the vicar of the parish. But, owing to some negligence, this right had been lost to the freeholders and trustees of Haworth . . . and the power of choosing a minister had lapsed into the hands of the Vicar of Bradford.”

The people had no personal objection to either Mr. Brontë or Mr. Redhead, but they would have no man nominated by any authority other than their own. Mr. Redhead, not so wise

as Mr. Brontë, or perhaps not knowing the character of the people so well—undertook the charge given to him.

The first Sunday of his ministry the church was filled with a congregation that appeared to be quiet enough until the reading of the second lesson, when the whole congregation rose to its clogged feet, and went clattering down the aisles, making all the noise they could, until nobody was left in the church but Mr. Redhead and the clerk. The following Sunday the church was again filled, with the exception of the aisles. During the reading of the services a half-witted man rode into the church upon an ass, with his face turned toward the tail, and as many old hats piled on his head as he could carry. As he urged the beast round the aisles the screams and cries and laughter drowned Mr. Redhead's voice, until he had to stop.

The third Sunday Mr. Redhead, who was evidently a man of more valour than discrimination, rode up to the church supported by several men from Bradford. This was more than the Haworth folk were going to put up with, and they then set about their side of the business in good earnest. Taking a drunken chimney-sweep with them they put him in front of the reading desk, where "his blackened face," says Mr. Gaskell's informant, "nodded a drunken stupid assent to all that Mr. Redhead said. At last, prompted by some mischief-maker, or from some tipsy impulse, he clambered up the pulpit stairs, and attempted to embrace Mr. Redhead. Then the profane fun grew fast and furious. Some of the more riotous pushed the soot-

covered chimney-sweeper against Mr. Redhead as he tried to escape. They threw both him and his tormentor down on the ground in the church-yard where the sootbag had been emptied, and though, at last, Mr. Redhead escaped into the 'Black Bull,' the doors of which were immediately barred, the people raged without, threatening to stone him and his friends. One of my informants is an old man, who was the landlord of the inn at that time, and he stands to it that such was the temper of the irritated mob, that Mr. Redhead was in real danger of his life. This man, however, planned an escape for his unpopular inmates. Giving directions to his hunted guests to steal out at the back door (through which, probably, many a ne'er-do-weel has escaped from good Mr. Grimshaw's whip), the landlord and some of the stable boys rode the horses belonging to the party from Bradford backwards and forwards before his front door, among the fiercely expectant crowd. They then rode after the visitors, who had crept behind the street."

This was the last time Mr. Redhead attempted to preach in Haworth church until years afterwards, when he was invited. On that occasion he humorously mentioned his previous reception.

Patrick Brontë, in spite of his Irish parentage and the tales about his furious temper, appears to have brought with him a quiet time for the church, until 1840. This time the battle was between the Church and the dissenters. Twenty years before, the church people had raised a tumult because they refused to pay for a minister if they could not choose

him themselves ; now there was tumult because the Methodists and Baptists refused to pay the Church rates. Charlotte Brontë, writing about the incident, says that two sermons were preached against dissent in the church, and the dissenters were invited. They closed their own chapels, and went in a body.

“ A keener, cleverer, bolder and more heart-stirring harangue than that which Mr. C. delivered from Haworth pulpit last Sunday evening I never heard. He did not rant ; he did not cant ; he did not whine ; he did not sniggle ; he just got up and spoke with the boldness of a man who was impressed with the truth of what he was saying. I do not say that I agree either with him, or with Mr. W., either in all or in half their opinions. I consider them bigoted, intolerant, and wholly unjustifiable on the ground of common sense. My conscience will not let me be either a Puseyite or a Hookist ; but if I were a dissenter I would have taken the first opportunity of kicking, or horse-whipping, both the gentlemen for their stern, bitter attack on my religion and its teachers.”

In this, and in a later letter, she showed that, whatever impression she might give in her novels, at heart she was tolerant even to the dissenters. In the second letter she also gives us a glimpse of her “ curates.”

“ The other day they (the curates) dropped, or rather rushed in unexpectedly to tea. It was Monday (baking day) and I was hot and tired ; still, if they had behaved quietly and decently, I would have served them out their tea in peace ; but they began glorifying themselves, and abusing dissenters in such a manner that my temper lost its balance, and I pronounced a few sentences sharply and rapidly, which struck them all dumb. Papa was greatly horrified also, but I don't regret it.”

Mr. Brontë was greatly respected in the neighbourhood, in spite of his reserve. In 1846 he became blind from a cataract in the eyes, but insisted upon fulfilling his duties. One of his congregation told of the pathetic sight of this old man, in the top tier of the "three-decker" pulpit, his eyes fixed on one spot, in front of him. After undergoing an operation, however, he regained his sight, and lived a life of quiet usefulness for many years. He died in June, 1861, aged 84.

In the old church there were door-plates on the pews to the effect that so-and-so held three and a half sittings in the pew, and so-and-so two and a half. The halves meant that one holder of a half sitting could attend morning service, the other evening.

The tower only is left of the old church. Whether the new building has anything in keeping with the new Haworth or not it is difficult to say, but it has certainly nothing in keeping with the old. Inside the church, however, there are features of interest. The one which receives the most attention is the mural tablet of white Carrara marble, to the memory of Maria and Patrick Brontë, and their six children—five of whom were buried at Haworth, and Anne, the youngest, at Scarborough.

The old three-decker pulpit, which had supported the two Wesleys, Whitfield, Grimshaw and Patrick Brontë, was taken away when the new church was built, and for many years reposed in a hayloft, dusty, mouldy and forgotten. It is now, however, in use again, in the Mission Church at Stanbury. It is of oak, constructed in 1742, and was formerly surmounted

by a beautiful sounding board. Under a portion of it, round the rim, were the words "For I am determined not to know anything among you save Christ Jesus, and Him crucified. Grimshaw, A.B. 1742."

Two large pewter flagons are still kept in the vestry. One bears the inscription :

" In Jesus we live, in Jesus we rest,
And thankful receive His dying bequest
The Cup of Salvation His mercy bestows
And all from His passion our happiness flows.
A.D. 1750."

The other reads :

" Blest Jesus, what delicious Fare !
How sweet thine entertainments are !
Never did Angels taste above
Redeeming grace or dying love.
A.D. 1750."

STANBURY





STANBURY

CHAPTER XI

STANBURY

OF the three tragic figures of the Brontë sisters Anne's was the most tragic. She was the pretty one—her hair was thick, brown and curly, her eyes violet blue, she had dark, delicate eyebrows, and a skin of rose and white. Tender and tolerant, charming, patient and gentle, in her childhood and girlhood, from the day when she set out on the perilous adventure of governessing, to the time when the last amazing flicker of the desire to live sent her, dying, on that terrible journey to Scarborough.

We scarcely ever hear of her except in tones of tenderness or pity : she is the “ precious little sister,” made for protective love, but her life circumstances were too strong for her, and she gently faded out of them.

We get the first real glimpse of her in her quaint diary, found years after her death, in a little black box :

“ Four years ago I was at school. Since then I have been a governess at Blake Hall, left it, come to Thorpe Green, and seen the sea and York Minster. . . . We have got Keeper, got a sweet little cat and lost it, and also got a hawk. Got a wild goose which has flown away, and three tame ones, one of which has been killed.

"Emily is upstairs ironing. I am sitting in the dining-room in the rocking chair before the fire, with my feet on the fender. Papa is in the parlour. Tabby and Martha are, I think, in the kitchen. Keeper and Flossy are I don't know where. Little Dick is hopping in his cage—Emily is writing some poetry. . . . I wonder what it is all about."

For a long time she bore alone the suspense, the heart-burning and the suspicion of her brother's strange love affair : with Charlotte and Emily she bore his drink madness, having her sisters' sensitiveness without their staying power.

She had not even the happiness of her religion. Emily looked at its creeds with mercilessly clear eyes, examined them, then threw them aside without a qualm ; Charlotte, though her conscience was capable of being roused to drastic soul-searchings even by the admonitions of gentle Ellen Nussey, was able to see religion apart from creed. But poor Anne was perpetually entangled in their meshes, her innocent heart continually wrung with sorrowful remorse for her sins, her mind filled with misgivings concerning her unworthiness.

What an outlook on life for a young girl :

" In all we do, and hear, and see,
Is restless Toil and Vanity.

" The thirsty rivers drink their store,
And bear it rolling to the shore,
But still the ocean craves for more.
'Tis endless labour everywhere !
Sound cannot satisfy the ear,

" Light cannot fill the craving eye,
Nor riches half our wants supply,
Pleasure but doubles future pain,
And joy brings sorrow in her train.

"Laughter is mad, and reckless mirth—
What does she in this weary earth?
Should Wealth, or Fame, our Life employ,
Death comes, our labour to destroy.

"To snatch the untasted cup away,
For which we toiled so many a day.
What then remains for wretched man?"

If this were the only poem of its kind it might easily have been written by the little evangelist for a sermon, the introduction made as dark as possible to give force to the application: but it is more than that. Her answer is characteristic:

"To use life's comforts while he can,
Enjoy the blessings Heaven bestows,
Assist his friends, forgive his foes;
Trust God, and keep his statutes still,
Upright and firm, through good and ill.

'Thankful for all that God has given,
Fixing his firmest hopes on heaven;
Knowing that earthly joys decay,
But hoping through the darkest day."

She strikes the same note again; and here we have the real Anne Brontë:

"To labour and to love,
To pardon and endure,
To lift the heart to God above,
And keep the conscience pure."

Added to the abnormal domestic circumstances there was the creative temperament which never found the relief of a perfected expression. Charlotte wrote at least three books which must have given happiness in the writing—probably *The Professor* did, for she was reluctant to accept the

outsider's opinion of it—Emily let herself go in the wild freedom of *Wuthering Heights* and her poems. Anne, after practising her apprentice hand on *Agnes Grey*, for conscience' sake set about warning the world from her own sad experience about the evils of drink. In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* she is obviously dealing with a character which she does not understand, and which is particularly distasteful. We shall never know whether, her conscience satisfied, she would have created something natural to herself.

We are told that when the sisters took their walks on the moors Charlotte stayed at the waterfall, and Emily wandered to the moors beyond, but nobody tells us what became of Anne. It is easy to picture her climbing the hill to Stanbury, and walking about the village, her shy, sweet presence adding to its air of wistful charm, as the folk nodded to their familiar from the windows and doorways. For if the spirit of the moor was Emily's the spirit of Stanbury is of the same kin as Anne.

The wilder part of her surroundings was too alien for her to absorb and interpret, but had her home circumstances been different, and her upbringing such as to have encouraged free intercourse with the people about her, she might perhaps have been able to give us a moorland *Cranford*.

Stanbury is a dream village, where a stranger may go into the shops, or talk to the natives, and be accepted without curiosity—as in a dream. An influence steals over him which makes him feel that he has come home, for this is one of the spots in which he lived in a far-back age.



STANBURY



We know that nature, even here, is seen in her angry moods, when torrents from the hills enrage the beck until it rushes onwards with an angry shout, and once the moor up yonder became alive, and crawled forward, sickeningly, shudderingly. But these things were not of Stanbury. They were of the moors, and, having passed through Stanbury, left it even as it was before.

Stanbury is at its best on a still summer afternoon, or a quiet spring evening, when the birds are sleepy, the trees rustle gently, and the beck runs smoothly along, almost without a sound. Even the two mills, beside the beck, do not strike a jarring note, for they look as if they could not hurry if they tried. A man must be commercialized indeed to make a fortune at Stanbury.

The "Eagle Inn" has the moor for a background, and perhaps may look at its best when black with slashing rain, and giant winds rocking its foundations. But, though it may have passed through the troublous times of Halliwell Sutcliffe's *Silent Inn*, like its village it has been stronger in its gentleness than in the power of might. It is austere, durable, powerful, perhaps, but its chief feature is gentle hospitality.

There is a weirdness about these moorland inns. I went to one of them, one wild afternoon, when alone. Bleak and bare and lonely, a low, grey building at the edge of the moor, with the clouds settling about it; in a hamlet with every door closed, and not a sign of life. On opening the door I saw a man in a back room, washing-up, who came forward

to ask my desires. Then, rather to my consternation, for I had caught a glimpse of a front room which seemed to be prepared for visitors, he invited me to go through a dark passage, full of bottles and baskets and tins, and innumerable other things. There was scarcely a glimmer of light at the other end.

Taking my courage in both hands, however, I did as he bade me, and found at the end of the passage a door, at the top of several steps, which led into a back parlour. He followed me into the room, then stood looking at me.

He was a very silent man, with deep-set blue eyes, in his forehead deep cuts for wrinkles, and a great shock of hair.

After waiting a moment for his wife to appear, and finding that she did not, I asked for food.

He immediately disappeared, and returned after a while with two eggs, delicious bread and butter, cakes, and pastry, and tea with cream. Neither of us spoke. I was left to guess that he had prepared it himself.

On leaving I paused at the door, and he answered my question with two words: "A shilling."

It is difficult to believe that the people of these inns are there to make a living; they are rather the genii of the moor, who rise up when needed.

When I saw Stanbury first it was a village mourning its dead. The blinds in every window were drawn, shutting out the glare of day, and the streets were empty. In the old Stanbury days the body was taken to Haworth, and, as there was no hearse, the coffin was carried from Stanbury

to Haworth, followed by a procession. A certain number of friends would walk in front, and sing through the village some well-known hymn, to a very solemn minor tune: one man would go to all the funerals to strike up all the tunes. A favourite hymn was the question:

' And am I only born to die,
And must I suddenly comply,
With nature's stern decree?
What after death for me remains,
Celestial joys or hellish pains,
To all eternity? "

Stanbury is of Wordsworth's world. Not the Rydal and Grasmere of to-day, with its streams of motor-cars and visitors, but the world he partly created, and partly saved for us before it slipped away into the past. The feeling that I was in a Wordsworth village was so strong that when I saw a narrow plank across a stream I found myself repeating:

" No mate nor comrade Lucy knew;
She dwelt on a wide moor,
The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a cottage door.

' They followed from the snowy bank
Those footsteps one by one,
Into the middle of the plank;
And further there were none."

When I was told that a child had fallen from the plank, when the stream was swollen, and her body carried half a mile before it was recovered, I felt no surprise, for I had known all about it since I was a child. It therefore came as a shock when I was introduced to the child's sister, and learnt

that the incident happened only a month before, during the very last heavy rains.

But even then the tune went lilting on :

“ Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child ;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.

“ O’er rough and smooth she trips along,
And never looks behind ;
And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind.”

As Wordsworth did, in wandering about we find old shepherds and old schoolmasters, who have all eternity before them in which to tell their tales, and it is our loss if we have not time to listen.

But nowhere could I find a Harry Gill, who

“ Evermore his teeth did chatter,
Chatter, chatter, chatter still ! ”

because he refused to allow poor Goody Blake to gather sticks for her fire. Lambs were skipping among the daisies, and the cows were lowing in the pastures, but the farmers not only seemed to be unhurried, but I could hear no tale whatever about the propensity to “ nip a curran’ i’ two.” Very soon, alas ! the lowing of cattle will be heard in these hills no more, for the Keighley Corporation Waterworks is stretching its arms right away to the heights, and the water must be kept pure, therefore cattle will soon be forbidden to trespass even in the pasture-land.

Stanbury has expressed itself in music. Mr. Joseph





STANBURY

Craven tells of a lad who learnt to play the fiddle, and had a longing to play well enough to play before the Queen. Being a sensible youth, he knew that this would mean a great deal of preparation, therefore he practised so much that his father thought he ought to do something more than playing, and drove him out of the house. Hearing strange noises, however, he went outside, and saw his son on the roof, sitting across the rigging with his book against the chimney, playing away with all his might. Perseverance and determination had their reward, for one day he played before her Majesty Queen Victoria.

Of a similar calibre were the boys who made up the Lumbfoot Band. They had a great day, once, in October 1863, when the firm that worked Lumbfoot Mill gave their workpeople a trip to Morecambe. The Band played for the procession, when, about three o'clock in the morning, they all set out in the chill dawn to march to Haworth, where they met workpeople from another factory, then marched on to Keighley. Many of them had never seen the sea before. Arriving at Keighley again, late at night, the indefatigable band started playing again, but somebody stepped up to the drummer and cut his drum. Stones were thrown at the band, and a scrimmage took place, but, at the end, the band took up their instruments again, and, triumphant, played through Keighley. They marched along the high road to Haworth, proclaiming their joy to the sleepy and less privileged folk in their beds, then woke the echoes of the hills over the moor to Stanbury.

Once a year, for a day, they have their fill of music. On the second Sunday in June Scar Top Charity is held, and, if fine, instead of meeting in the little chapel, the Anniversary Services are held near the mill. The people used to come in their thousands, filling the grounds of the mill, the fields adjoining, and even the lanes beyond. Mr. Joseph Craven heard a native, an old woman of 76, describe the "charity." She said :

"There's Will Feather with his trombone as clean as a new pin an' as breet as silver, with his black coat, white waistcoat an' checked trousers, an' Jim Feather, with his clarionette, an' Will o' Ponden, also a clarionette, an' John o' Ponden the ophicleide, an' there was Jim Briggs o' Dean-field with his big bass fiddle. An' there were Sim o' Tim's in t' middle conducting, an' Doad o' Tim's one side, an' Ned at t' other side."

Besides these there were singers and players from the different places round.

One man who lived close by, and who was unmarried, lived chiefly on porridge, but he baked twice a year, at Scar Top Charity and at Christmas.

At one time the Quakers had a strong movement at Stanbury. In an old chest, in Liverpool, were found their old registers. In a list of persecutions there comes the quaint description : "I William Clayton being at a meeting at Padiham the 20 day of the 7 month 1660 to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth and having a word of exhortation in my hart to speake unto the people there came the constable

and the priest with others with a warrant from Colonel Nowell to apprehend some of us and the priest laid vilant hands on me and pulled me down and out of the meeting and pulled me into the towns street and I was by the constable and others brought before Thomas Brunnddell and Thomas Parker called Justices of the peace For refusinge to swear was committed to the gaoll at Loncastor . . . the Justices being filled with wrath fined me five pounds and for refusing to pay the fine I was committed to prison for three months and being put in the hands of unreasonable men to be conveyed to the hous of Correction which for their fees and drinking puled of my coat an carried me to the hous of correction without coat and the governar there put in the dungeon five days and five nights untill modrat people of the town procured my liberty into better romes and thus like priest like Justice like baliff like governor all filled with wrath and conspired together to punish the inosent people of the Lord without moderation as men and without mercy."

The Stanbury folk have been law-abiding, very little crime has been known of. It is said that a man was once tried for forgery, and would have been hanged, but that man of resource, William Grimshaw, proved that he could neither read nor write. One of their schoolmasters taught behaviour by a method all his own. On his desk were a number of small sticks, from the woods, and when a scholar was inattentive he would throw one of the sticks, and scarcely ever missed the child aimed at. During prayers more sticks went than at any other time. After prayers all the children

who had received the sticks had to march up to the table with them in their hands, then the order came : " Hold out your hand ! "

Once Stanbury was stricken by a plague so virulent that it was spoken of in whispers as the black fever. It pointed its hot finger at one house after another, and, a little later, that house gave up its dead. The terrified people who had managed to escape were afraid to visit their neighbours, and some of the sick were left to die unattended. One day a man came, a man with a sad face, a silent tongue, and gentle, skilful hands ; he was nurse and doctor both. Nobody knew where he came from, or what was his name.

He was evidently not human, for he needed little sleep, and scarcely took thought for food. Night and day, for weeks, he nursed the sick, fed them, and prescribed healing medicines, and in the cases where the fever proved triumphant, with his own hands prepared their bodies for the last resting place. The curiosity of the people changed to wonder, from wonder to worship.

When the plague was at last driven away the man disappeared, and was never heard of more.

PONDEN





PONDEN HALL, THE "THRUSCROSS GRANGE" OF "WUTHERING HEIGHTS"

CHAPTER XII

PONDEN

THE personality of Ponden is again different. Its peacefulness is the dignified calm of rest after achievement.

The quiet, luscious fields, the avenue of trees, the green, well-made, curving road, setting out deliberately for the Hall, the hoary ruin, refusing to be beaten by time, and the present Hall itself suggest generations of men who not only reclaimed the moor, but were conquerors long enough to acquire the sense, and the pride, of possession.

This they told to any who cared to know by the inscription over the door of the present Hall.

THE
Old house
(now standing) was
built by Robert Heaton
for his son Michael
Anno Domini 1634.
The old Porch and Peat
house was built by his
Grandson Robert
Heaton A.D. 1680.
The present building
was Rebuilt by his
descendant R. H. 1807.

The avenue, now reaching from the road immediately in front of the Hall to the reservoir, indicates the route of the old road, and in spring the cherry tree, with the two at the bottom near the beck, are a wonderful sight.

A giant chestnut rests an arm, half as thick as its trunk, on the roof of the ruin, long grass and a small elder are growing on the bedroom floor. In the grassy road in front black and white lambs are grazing; from its old porch, to the left can be seen hills, edged with moorland, to the right, still again moors, in front, distant hills, seen through a blue haze. The low, broad-mullioned windows are still there, and the remains of what was once a massive fireplace.

Judging by his descendants this Robert Heaton who built the house for his son must have been something of a poet, as well as a man of muscle. What he was, or where he hailed from, we do not know, but probably the Heatons had lived in the neighbourhood even before his time. But he it was who saw the possibilities of this bit of land on the hill, and by the time that his son was old enough to need a home of his own Robert was in the position to begin founding "his house." The Heatons have been quarrymen, stone merchants, and yeomen, they have had an interest in a coal mine, and they built a cotton mill and a corn mill at Ponden. They were keen sportsmen, freeholders of Stanbury moors for over three hundred years. They have been musical. They not only formed a band, and found a room for the practising, but themselves played instruments. John Heaton, the last of them, took a great interest in the choir at Scar Top Chapel,

played the harmonium there, and composed, and arranged the parts for, music for the Anniversary. Mr. Halliwell Sutcliffe describes him as being the last of a fine breed of yeomen, rugged and courteous of speech, a farmer first and the owner of a good library afterwards; shy of company a little, yet full of old-world hospitality when the need demanded; sturdy and upright, and fair-dealing, with a heart as clean as the winds that rock old Ponden House to sleep at nights.

He was one of five brothers, all bachelors, and now the house belongs to a Miss Heaton, a cousin.

The Hall is thought by some to be Emily Brontë's "Thrushcross Grange." Mr. Clement Shorter, in the Haworth edition of Mrs. Gaskell's "Life," says: "It is clear that Ponden House, near Haworth, did duty for at least the interior of "Wuthering Heights." Some have associated Ponden House with "Thornfield," in *Jane Eyre*, and it is said that certain interior features tally with Mr. Rochester's home.

The trouble is to get rid of the widespread idea that the Brontës were not artists, but photographers. It is quite likely that both "Wuthering Heights" and "Thrushcross Grange" never existed at all except in the brain of Emily Brontë. What concerns us at the moment is that Ponden Hall has the personality of "Thrushcross Grange." The Brontës and the Heatons were good friends, and, without even suggesting that one of the Heatons was a model for Edgar Linton, he had many of the characteristics of the Heatons. Seen through Heathcliff's eyes, and compared with Heathcliff, he cuts a rather poor figure, but seen apart, when he has

reached man's estate, he is dignified, if gentle, affectionate and tender, a courtly gentleman. The reason why Higher Withens and Ponden Hall are considered by the many to be "Wuthering Heights" and "Thrushcross Grange" is because if they were not they easily could have been.

It is easy to imagine Catherine, decked in silk and feathers after the Lintons have made a fine lady of her, mounting to the horsing steps in the courtyard, and, earlier, the two gipsy figures of Catherine and Heathcliff crouching under the low window of the drawing-room, to see "whether the Lintons passed their Sunday evenings standing shivering in corners, while their father and mother sat eating and drinking, and singing and laughing, and burning their eyes out before the fire. Or reading sermons, and being catechized by their man-servant, and set to learn a column of scripture names, if they don't answer properly."

They have their ghost at Ponden. Sometimes it is an old man, carrying a lantern, but it often comes as a flaming barrel, which rolls down the fields and past the house front, then along the curving highway until it comes to rest at the "hive holes"—a sheltered corner where the Heatons used to keep their bees. The old man takes a different path. There is a high-walled garden above the Hall, and, after crossing the fields, he makes for this. Some say he climbs the cherry tree in the corner, or, they say, he used to climb the pear tree that stood near the garden gate.

It seems a pity to try to explain the fiery barrel by calling it a will-o'-the-wisp. We like to think of the undaunted folk

of the valley coming to the bend in Ponden Road to watch it roll down the hill, leaning the while against the wall, and smoking their black pipes.

A Stanbury man who understood the Black Art laid the ghost. One cold winter's afternoon he took with him his instruments of magic and waited for it. It came, this time in the form of the old man, so the magician lifted his rush-candle and read the "Book of the Black Art" backwards, holding the while the candle in the poor ghost's face—it says much for its courage and patience that it stayed to the end.

Then the magician said solemnly :

"Niver come nigh th' owd house again till tha sees this rushlight burn to th' end!" and he put the candle, flame and all, into his own mouth, and swallowed it.

Then, and not till then, the ghost dropped his lantern in the road and fled across the fields; and we cannot wonder that he has never set foot in the district since.

The fierce element of the moor visited Ponden at least once, and left its traces in the stones scattered about one of the meadows, where the fish-pond stands. Robert Heaton was shooting on the moor, the day of the bog eruption, but hurried home for fear of the approaching storm. A boy, sent to fetch the cattle home before the flood arrived, said that when it approached Ponden it looked like a dark semi-liquid mass, which rolled over and over, more like thick treacle than water. The boggy flood ran quietly down the valley, and when he saw it at Griff it was of the consistency of porridge. After

it had subsided the depth it had reached was measured, and there was sixteen yards deep of mud and water. Some of the spectators said that it looked as though the whole moor-top were turning over on its side and rolling downwards.

Patrick Brontë's sermon on the event was published in pamphlet form, and is described as "a sermon preached in the Church of Haworth on Sunday, the 12th day of September, 1824, in reference to an EARTHQUAKE and extraordinary eruption of mud and water, that had taken place ten days before, in the moors of that chapelry." There is also a description in verse, which he calls "The Phenomenon."

He persisted in calling it an earthquake, though the editor of the *Leeds Mercury* and others thought that the cause of the disruption was a water-spout.

"The suddenness and violence of the disruption favours this supposition. It would evidently require a power acting with a great degree of momentum to move and break in pieces the large and almost solid masses of peat and turf which were forced down the hill, to say nothing of the detached rocks which were moved."

Mr. Brontë tells, in his sermon, that, as the day was fine, he had sent the children, accompanied by the servants, to take an airing on the common, and as they stayed longer than he expected he went upstairs to look for them.

"The heavens over the moor were blackening fast. I heard muttering of distant thunder, and saw the frequent flashing of the lightning. Though, ten minutes before, there was scarcely a breath of air stirring, the gale freshened rapidly, and carried

along with it clouds of dust and stubble ; and by this time some large drops of rain clearly announced an approaching heavy shower. My little family had escaped to a place of shelter, but I did not know it. I consequently watched every movement of the coming tempest with a painful degree of interest. The house was painfully still. Under these circumstances I heard a deep, distant explosion, something resembling, yet something differing from thunder, and I perceived a gentle tremour in the chamber in which I was standing, and in the glass of the window just before me, which, at the time, made an extraordinary impression on my mind ; and which, I have no manner of doubt now, was the effect of an Earthquake at the place of eruption. This was a solemn visitation of Providence, which, by the help of God, I shall endeavour to improve."

The editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, who visited Crow Hill a few days after the bog-burst, says that stones of an immense size and weight were hurried by the torrent more than a mile, the quantity of water was so great that it made a channel twelve feet wide, and seven or eight feet deep, and was precipitated with such violence that the noise could be heard miles away. It was confined within the narrow glen until it reached Ponden, when it spread over the fields, filled up the mill-pond, choked up the water courses, and thereby put a stop to the works. Here it nearly swept away a stone bridge, but it was seen in time to prevent loss of life. Here the water presented a breast of seven feet high.

The first bursting of the bog took place at six o'clock on the Thursday evening, and the second at about eight next morning. On the following Thursday there were four eruptions. A gentleman who saw the last of them says :

“ In the cavity made by the former eruptions, now about a quarter of a mile in length, a vast body of peaty earth was in motion, moving slowly down the channel, all the while receiving fresh accessions of mud and peat, till the whole cavity was filled. Having at length reached the precipice it rushed over the steep with a tremendous noise, which was distinctly heard at a distance of four miles.”

Then the thick mass crawled forward, gathering as it went stones, trees, mats of heather and gorse, and dead sheep ; standing still, at times, when it came to a larger obstacle than usual, then apparently turning over as it went forward again. It seemed to be alive—creeping forward to carry out some implacable, mysterious purpose.

Added to the noise of the explosions were the thunder and lightning, and the lowing of frightened cattle, and the hushed voices of white-faced people in the valley, trying only half-heartedly to make safe their little possessions, for they still believed that the Lord their God was a terrible God, who sent His punishments in strange, unexpected forms. When no mortal could tell what shape this visitation was going to take it was useless to pit their little strength against the Almighty.

Says their pastor :

“ Now the grand First Cause of this and other phenomenon is God, whose instruments all are the elements, to execute His various purposes of infinite justice or mercy. Earthquakes have been in different ages and countries the most dreadfully effective instruments of vengeance, which God has employed against His guilty creatures.”





PONDEN KIRK, THE "PENISTONE CRAG" OF "WUTHERING HEIGHTS"

The bog must have been an awful sight as it came over the top of Ponden Kirk, and dropped thickly into the valley below—a great waterfall of mud. Ponden Kirk, the Penistone Crag of *Wuthering Heights*, is a ledge of high rock, through which a hole has been driven by wind and weather. This is a significant hole, to be avoided by the timorous, for, it is said, if a girl can manage to creep through she will marry before the year is out, but if she cannot——!!

The Kirk is thought to be of Druidical origin. “Lid-church” is one of the “churches” of Derbyshire, further north these are called “kirks.” The rock is dry in summer, but forms a stupendous cataract after heavy rains. One writer has said that it was this waterfall that Charlotte Brontë came to see when she caught the cold which resulted in her death. If so it explains the apparent discrepancy of the seven or eight miles spoken of by Mrs. Gaskell. The fall usually called the “Brontë Fall” is only about two and a half miles from Haworth, and it would be difficult to imagine it, even after melted snow, as “a perfect torrent racing over the rocks, white and beautiful.”

Seen from below, the Kirk looks insignificant; in the sketch the artist has caught the spirit of the place itself, the wonderful valley, terrible in its silence and its magnitude. As water runs deeply and silently in the narrow places it seems as though the personality of the wide-spreading moors has been caught, and held, for a moment, in this narrow spot.

It would naturally be the place sought by the Hermit

Scholar, Thomas o' Buckley. The path on the right of the valley, looking from the Kirk, was his favourite walk. He lived in the little cottage below, went about amongst his fellows, silent and unnoticed, when necessity bade him, and spent the rest of his time with his books. It is said that the clock in his kitchen was silent twenty years because its ticking disturbed his studies; days, weeks and months passed him by unnoticed.

Away on Crow Hill, where the Stanbury and the Lancashire moors meet, there is a stone, on which is chiselled, "Lad of Scarr or Crow Hill." The cairn is called, at times, "The Lancashire Lad," at others "Laddock Royle," or "The Lad o' Crow Hill." It tells a double story, first of the storm which killed the boy, when walking over from Lancashire, then the sordid one of the two counties, that quarrelled as to who should bury him. Lancashire refused because he had been found dead in Yorkshire, and Yorkshire refused because, though found dead on a Yorkshire moor, he was a Lancashire boy. Trawdon, a Lancashire village, buried him, after the dispute had gone on for some time, and this has been put down to Lancashire thrift, for they immediately afterwards claimed a goodly part of the moor; but surely a little human decency entered into the transaction.

Also on Crow Hill, on its loftiest eminence, at a height of 1500 feet above sea level, there is a heap of rocks called Oakenden Stones. Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary* tells us that this cromlech is an evident Druidical remain, consisting of one flat stone, weight about six tons, placed

horizontally upon two upright stones, now half embedded in heather.

Our forefathers, instinct and imagination more highly developed than knowledge, peopled their woods with fairies and their valleys with ghosts. On the high, wind-swept spaces they built their altars to Unknown Gods.

WUTHERING HEIGHTS





"WUTHERING HEIGHTS," WITHENS

CHAPTER XIII

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

A HOUSE on the sky-line, alone. When we reached it we could not only guess, but feel the "power of the north wind blowing over the edge," and the gaunt thorn, "stretching its limbs as though craving alms of the sun," joined its irritated whistle to the roar of the sycamore and ash. Possibly there are times when there is no gale; but perfect quiet, in that spot, would be as ominous as Heathcliff's years of silence, when he was planning, and preparing, his revenge.

It is now not only lonely, but desolate. The upper windows, which once had leaded panes, diamond shaped, are now paneless, flapping pieces of cotton vainly trying to cover them; the outside is neglected, a few ruffled hens are the only sign of life.

Higher Withens, Mr. Halliwell Sutcliffe's "Withens," and thought by many to be Emily Brontë's "Wuthering Heights," consists of a farmhouse, a barn, and about fifty acres of land. The farm is firmly planted, end-on, to the hillside. It was left in trust, in 1723, by one David Midgley, to "clothe with good and convenient blue clothes and other necessary wearing apparel ten poor children of the township of Haworth, to be

from time to time made choice of at the discretion of the said trustees and their heirs, which children should be under the age of seven years, if the rents and profits of the said premises would extend to the same." A tablet in Haworth church records the deed :

" D. M. Lord of the Manor of Haworth, left a farm forever to clothe yearly ten poor children (in blue) belonging to the said parish."

There is a farm on the Haworth moors which has been occupied by the same family for three hundred years. It is pretty much like every other farm, and at least half a mile away from its neighbours. When we knocked at the door our knocking created such a pandemonium within that we quite expected to be met with some of Heathcliff's hairy monsters when the door was opened. The dogs were friendly enough, however, and after we were seated there was no canine mother sneaking wolfishly to the back of our legs, her lip curled up, and her white teeth watering for a snatch. The fortunate one to whom the farm descends clings tenaciously until death unclasps his fingers, his successor, who has been waiting quietly in exile, takes his place, content for the first time in his life. The present tenant waited long, but has at last come home. He told us of ghosts that come out to watch the glory of the games that the moon and the mist play together, when the moor is sunk in the silence of night.

The moor lover only can understand the fascination of the moor. It is something more than heather and rock and bracken, more than sobbing wind and crying curlew; its

loneliness is not the lack of kind, but the hunger for something unattained—a longing which has crept into the moor's very sounds, the cries of its birds, and sheep, and kine. Even the half initiated feel it, and creep shudderingly back to the human—the Emily Brontës go forward.

The *Shirley* district is supposed to be round about Birstall, but Charlotte Brontë must have been thinking of these moors when she wrote the words that Shirley spoke to Caroline :

“ Nature is now at her evening prayers : she is kneeling before those red hills. I see her prostrate on the great steps of her altar, praying for a fair night for mariners at sea, for travellers in deserts, for lambs on moors, and unfledged birds in woods. Caroline, I see her ! and I will tell you what she is like : she is like what Eve was when she and Adam stood alone on earth. . . . I saw—I now see—a woman-Titan : her robe of blue air spreads to the outskirts of the heath, where yonder flock is grazing ; a veil white as an avalanche sweeps from her head to her feet, and arabesques of lightning flame on its borders. Under her breast I see her zone, purple like that horizon : through its blush shines the star of evening. Her steady eyes I cannot picture ; they are clear—they are deep as lakes—they are lifted and full of worship—they tremble with the softness of love and the lustre of prayer. Her forehead has the expanse of a cloud, and is paler than the early moon, risen long before dark, gathers : she reclines her bosom on the ridge of Stilbro' Moor ; her mighty hands are joined beneath it. . . . I will stay out here with my mother Eve, in these days called Nature. I love her—undying, mighty being ! Heaven may have faded from her brow when she fell in paradise ; but all that is glorious on earth shines there still.”

There has been much conjecture as to where *Wuthering Heights* came from. It has been said that Emily Brontë got her plot from German legends and Irish folk tales, her people from Branwell's wild tales of heathenish folk who peopled the Yorkshire and Lancashire moors, and several places have been cited as the district itself.

Whatever influence Emily Brontë may have received from other sources, no characters could have been so vividly alive which had not come straight from her own brain, and whether or not the Haworth moors were the inspiration of *Wuthering Heights* they are stupendous enough to have been so. Here, beyond Stanbury, the moors cease to roll, they march, they march to the music of a host of giants: they are wonderful, they are imperious—they are terrifying.

At Higher Withens lives a solitary man, a discharged soldier trying to regain his health. Every day he creeps down below to seek his fellows, and sometimes stays there all day, for that solitude is too much for any human being who has not sought it voluntarily. Even then, for any but the strong, it would mean either mental atrophy or madness. That rarefied air can only be breathed by those who seek it because they have reached the stage when it is life itself.

Emily Brontë sought it. This lonely soul, who never knew fame, and appreciation from her two sisters only, poor in worldly goods, and almost friendless, neither needs nor desires our pity, for she sought her loneliness as a lover seeks a world in which he may be alone with his beloved.

- " Silent is the house; all are laid asleep :
One alone looks out o'er the snow-wreaths deep.
Watching every cloud, dreading every breeze
That whirls the wildering drift, and bends the groaning trees.
- " Cheerful is the hearth, soft the matted floor ;
Not one shivering gust creeps through pane or door ;
The little lamp burns straight, its rays shoot strong and far :
I trim it well, to be the wanderer's guiding-star.
- " Frown, my haughty sires ! chide, my angry dame ;
Set your slaves to spy ; threaten me with shame :
But neither sire nor dame, nor prying serf shall know
What angel nightly tracks that waste of frozen snow.
- " What I love shall come like visitant of air,
Safe in secret power from lurking human snare ;
What loves me, no word of mine shall e'er betray,
Though for faith unstained my life must forfeit pay.
- ' Burn, then, little lamp ; glimmer straight and clear—
Hush ! a rustling wing stirs, methinks, the air :
He for whom I wait, thus ever comes to me ;
Strange Power ! I trust thy might ; trust thou my constancy."

It has been said that this " visitant of air " is the kind of imagination which the Brontë children called " making out." Creation, of a quality reached by them in later years, brings a rare happiness, but it needs must be a self-detached soul indeed who finds in it the supreme rapture. To think of Emily Brontë's " angel " as " making out " is surely confusing expression with experience.

But even if, by a stretch of our own imagination, we are enabled to do this, it would be more difficult to explain " the messenger " in that way :

- " A messenger of hope comes every night to me,
And offers for short life, eternal liberty.

" He comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs,
With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars.
Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire,
And visions rise and change that kill me with desire.

" But, first, a hush of peace—a soundless calm descends;
The struggle of distress, and fierce impatience ends;
Mute music soothes my breast—unuttered harmony,
That I could never dream, till earth was lost to me.

" Then dawns the Invisible; the Unseen its truth reveals;
My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels:
Its wings are almost free—its home, its harbour found,
Measuring the gulf, it stoops, and dares the final bound."

This tells of no flesh and blood lover, and surely of no poet's ecstasy of "making out," but, as Miss May Sinclair has said, it is "the expression of the rarest and the most tremendous experience that is given to humanity to know." Few of us are willing to pay the price.

The grim stone altars of the moors speak eloquently of sacrifice to a jealous God, who will have no other God before Him. It needs no stretch of imagination to see the young body of Isaac laid on one of them, with Abraham at his side, the knife lifted in the air. The gospel of the Brontë country, which is here heard in its clearest tones, speaks the same stern language. Emily Brontë heard it, and, whether from necessity or choice, calmly and with apparent willingness, so far as she herself was concerned, accepted it.

M. Heger said of her: "She should have been a man—a great navigator. Her powerful reason would have deduced new spheres of discovery from the knowledge of the old; and her imperious will would never have been daunted by oppo-

sition or difficulty, never have given way but with life." She was robbed of her mother when but a baby, her nursery was a fireless room, a graveyard, and a barren heath, her world to discover, Haworth and its moors. She poured out her soul in verse, then, against her will, was persuaded to publish a book. Two copies were sold. She wrote a novel, it was badly printed, then sent out to a world which not only could not understand it but abused the author: the first words of appreciation came after she was dead. Robbed of practically everything that is supposed to make life rich, she sought the loneliest spot on the heights of the moor, and there sent out her challenge. "I will give you nothing" said Life. "Very well," she said, serenely, "then I will take everything." By that time she knew that for the bravest and the strongest the gospel of doing without is not a gospel of suffering only, but of achievement.

The bravest she was. She did not need to tell us, when Death was proclaiming his victory:

"No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear."

Not only were the thousand creeds that move men's hearts unutterably vain,

"Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idle froth amid the boundless main,"

but she treated Death himself with the same calm indifference—there simply wasn't room for him:

“ There is not room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render void :
Thou—THOU art Being and Breath,
And what THOU art may never be destroyed.”

It is our tragedy that her body was not of the fittest, that her soul passed beyond human reach when it had just learnt human language;—the tragedy is deeper than, as in so many instances in this barren district, the body gave out when such a little more of life's good things would have kept it alive.

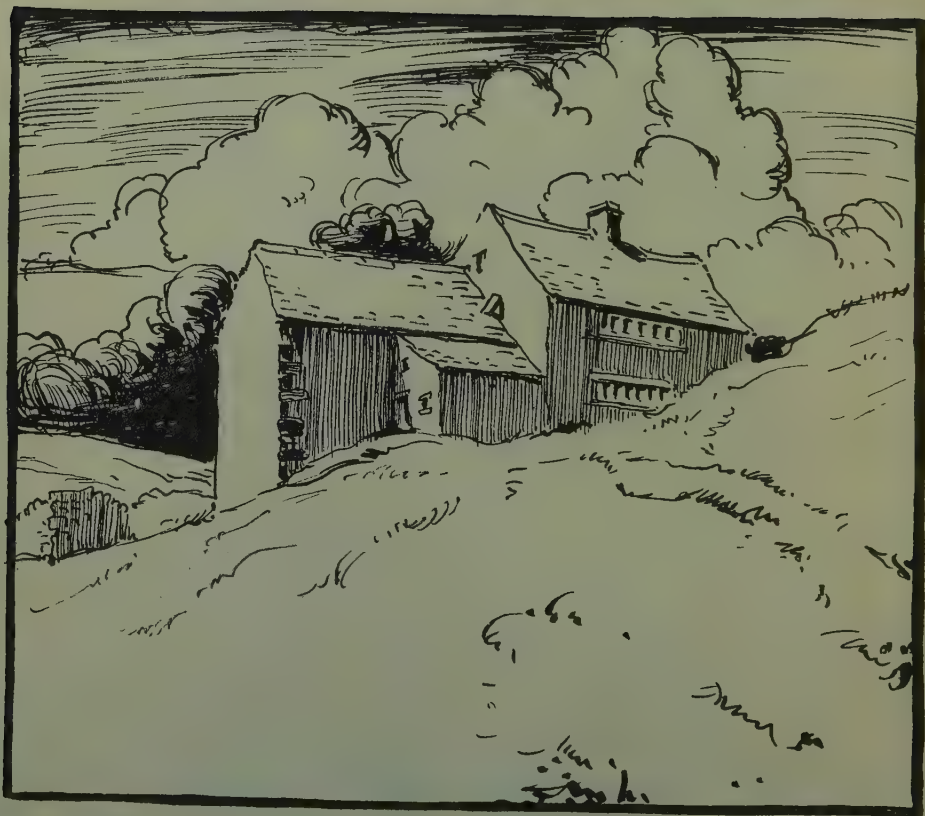
It is said that she could never have written another book. The same would have been said of her sister, if she had happened to die after writing *Jane Eyre*; indeed it was said that she would never have written another after *Villette*.

Genius has a way of laughing at human limitations.

It is true that every character in *Wuthering Heights* is exaggerated—there are no people alive like Heathcliff and Catherine and Joseph. But there was no language in existence to express what she wanted to say, and it was only by exaggeration that she could say it. As somebody has said of Dickens' characters, “ they are twice as large as life, and four times as natural.” There is no spoken language expressive enough to describe the triumph of spirit over matter. For the keynote of this book, with its tale of hate that begets hate, of revenge that defeats itself, is the triumph of love.

It is no conscious propaganda against conventional morality. Nelly Dean, fluttering about in mortal terror, and Edgar Linton, walking calm and unsuspecting up the drive from church, when Catherine is in Heathcliff's arms,





WITHENS, HAWARTH MOOR

are there because the artist could not leave them out : they are in the picture, but not in the foreground. What she is concerned with is this passionate love, which, having brought together two souls, passes convention by without even a swerve in its direction, licks up the evil and degradation in Heathcliff as so much loose straw, and burns its way through the gates of death.

“ You love Edgar Linton, and Edgar loves you,” reasoned Nelly Dean. “ All seems smooth and easy—where is the obstacle ? ”

“ *Here !* and *here !* ” replied Catherine, striking one hand on her forehead and the other on her breast ; “ in whichever place the soul lives—in my soul, and in my heart, I’m convinced I’m wrong.”

“ That’s very strange ! I cannot make it out.”

“ That’s my secret ; but if you will not mock at me, I’ll explain it ; I can’t do it distinctly—but I’ll give you a feeling of how I feel.”

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Apparently taking up another subject, she commenced in a short time :

“ If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be extremely miserable. I dreamt once that I was there—heaven did not seem to be my home ; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth ; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights ; where I awoke, sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret as well as the other. I’ve no more business

to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire."

After they are both married, and Heathcliff is trying to persuade Nelly Dean to arrange a meeting between them, he says :

"I wish you had sincerity enough to tell me whether Catherine would suffer greatly from his loss. The fear that she would restrains me. And there you see the distinction between our feelings. Had he been in my place and I in his, though I hated him with a hatred that turned my life to gall, I never would have raised a hand against him. You may look incredulous if you please! I never would have banished him from her society so long as she desired his."

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"The day she was buried there came a fall of snow. In the evening I went to the churchyard. . . . Being alone, and conscious two yards of loose earth was the sole barrier between us, I said to myself :

" 'I'll have her in my arms again! If she be cold, I'll think it is this north wind that chills *me*; and if she be motionless it is sleep.'

" 'I got a spade from the tool house, and began to delve with all my might—it scraped the coffin; I fell to work with my hands; the wood commenced cracking about the screws! I was on the point of attaining my object, when it seemed that

I heard a sigh from some one above, close at the edge of the grave, and bending down. 'If I can only get this off,' I muttered, 'I wish they may shovel the earth above us both!' and wrenched at it more desperately still. There was another sigh, close to my ear. I appeared to feel a warm breath of it displacing the sleet-laden wind. I knew no living thing of flesh and blood was by—but, as certainly as you perceive the approach to some substantial body in the dark, though it cannot be discerned, so certainly I felt that Cathy was there, not under me, but on the earth.

"A sudden wave of relief flowed from my heart through every limb. I relinquished my labour of agony, and turned consoled at once, unspeakably consoled. Her presence was with me: it remained while I re-filled the grave, and led me home. You may laugh if you will, but I was sure I should see her there. I was sure she was with me, and I could not help talking to her."

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" 'Then you are not afraid of death?' I pursued.

" 'Afraid? No!' he replied. 'I have neither a fear nor a presentiment nor a hope of death—why should I? I have a single wish, and my whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it. They have yearned towards it so long, and so unwaveringly, that I'm convinced it *will* be reached—and *soon*—because it has devoured my existence—I am swallowed up in the anticipation of its fulfilment.' "

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" 'It is not my fault that I cannot eat or rest,' he replied. 'I assure you it is through no settled designs. But you might as well bid a man struggling in the water rest within arm's length of the shore! I must reach it first, then I'll rest. I'm too happy, and yet I'm not happy enough. My soul's bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself.' "

We agree that too much has been written about the Brontës, far too much has been surmised. More than any other writer they have been the prey of the sentimental hero-worshipper and sensation-monger. While they have been shamelessly commercialized their work has been over-estimated. It is with a smile rather supercilious that we take up again the books that they have written, and the books that have been written about them. We close the last one—and find that the madness has entered our own blood.

For they dared to gaze on life's fundamentals with naked eyes, and, though timid as a hare, shy as a fawn, they told us fearlessly what they saw.

THE END



